

TWO
FRENCH MARRIAGES.

BY

MRS. C. JENKIN,

AUTHOR OF "WHO BREAKS — PAYS," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1868.

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The New York Association of Authors

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MADAME DE BEAUPRÉ.

CHAPTER I.

MADAME DE BEAUPRÉ.

Q. What is a French country-town most like?

A. An English one.

English and French Vocabulary.

MADAME DE BEAUPRE

INSCRIBED TO

THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON OF TUAM.

A. A. English one

English and French Vocabulary

MADAME DE BEAUPRÉ.

CHAPTER I.

The Great Ladies of Magny le Sec.

"ONE hundred and fifty," was the nickname bestowed on the three old Mesdemoiselles de Tremereus by Gustave Godard the year he came to Magny le Sec as substitut du Procureur Impérial. "One hundred and fifty" they are called to this day, when their united ages would better justify the sobriquet of the Two Hundred. They lived and live in the great stone building, with the great garden on your right hand as you come from Paris. Their father, M. le Comte Adhemar de Tremereus, an *émigré* in his youth, in his mature age a pensioner of Louis XVIII., had never adopted the necessary measures to marry his daughters. On the contrary, he had always taken care it should be known they had no *dot* to expect during his life-time, and without a *dot* marriage remains an unknown bourne to French young ladies. M. le Comte watched them withering on their virgin stalks, observing pleasantly, "We are all old maids in our family." His egotism prospered with him as egotism is wont to do.

When he died, his two elder daughters, Mademoiselle Jacqueline and Mademoiselle Solanges, were no longer of an age to think of marrying; people were so good as to suppose it still possible that Mademoiselle Virginie and her cousin might yet make a match of it. Every one in Magny knew that the youngest sister had been attached to Anatole de Beaupré ever since she was sixteen; what was not so public, was, that he had been also the object of the secret worship of the two elder Demoiselles de Tremereus.

Early left an orphan, this cousin had been brought up in the De Tremereus family. He had been the romance of the life of the sisters, the hero of the day dreams of these women, who had never known any of the joys of youth, who had lived the lives of priestesses to the demon of selfishness, incarnate in the old Comte. Anatole brought a ray of light, a breath of spring, into that crusty old house. At twenty he was what is generally called a fine man — tall, with great, staring black eyes, a profusion of hair to match the colour of his eyes, a big nose, and thick red lips. Round the low forehead of their cousin, the sisters, one after the other, would have wreathed a "coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers," but he soon made them understand that he preferred "a peck of provender."

But women cannot bear to displace an idol; they prefer to shut their eyes and stuff their ears, and to continue their adoration. Mademoiselle Jacqueline hid

her maiden love under the form of maternal affection, using her age, poor soul! as a shield against conjectures as to another sort of affection. Her radiant hours were those when she had managed, by some cruel self-sacrifice, to fill the flaccid purse of the student in Paris.

Mademoiselle Solanges, nearer Anatole's age, was less disposed to the humility, more inclined to the resentment of slighted love.

Virginie alone had all the advantages of youth; she was as fresh as a rose, and gay as a lark, when she gave her heart to her cousin, who certainly had a shadow of a preference for her.

And here was the strange part of the affair. Jacqueline and Solanges not only concealed their own feelings, but they did all that women inexperienced in manœuvring could do, to bring about a marriage between Virginie and Anatole. To keep him with them, to serve him, to be sure of his presence, would be happiness enough for them. How is it that the inferior nature so constantly governs the superior?

Anatole preferred "a peck of provender" to young affection. He made it as clear as daylight to the Abbé Poulot, confessor to the Demoiselles de Tremereens, that a man would be wicked who should venture to marry in these days on such an income as he and Mademoiselle Virginie could alone hope for. Yes, he made a

neat calculation on paper, which proved satisfactorily to himself that he had reason and virtue on his side.

Years had gone by since that memorable conversation. The Comte Adhemar was with his ancestors. The sisters were withered old maids, laughed at, as the "One hundred and fifty," but the spoiled children of the clergy. They belonged to every *comme il faut* congregation, to all charitable committees. They were indefatigable canvassers for the Bureau de Bienfaisance, for the hospital and asylums. They begged for the repairs of the cathedral organ, for the spire of the convent, for new vestments for the curé of their parish. They fasted, attended all festivals, confessed in private and in common (*en communauté*). Their lives were busy, and would have been contented, but for Virginie.

Poor Virginie! Anatole had left her a sadder, but not a wiser woman. She had suffered for some years from one of those mysterious feminine maladies which medicine fails to reach. The doctors lay it on the nerves, and try in vain bark and pepsine, &c. &c. After declaring herself for years incapable of walking, one fine day Virginie found her legs, but she had clearly almost lost her head. She set to work to repair the irreparable outrages of time. She dyed her hair, enamelled her face, passed her days shut up in her room, devising, or as she expressed it, *composing* costumes, which she exhibited to the mortification of her sisters, and to the amusement of the town. She

had the most manifest horror of being thought old, and nothing was so easy as to make her show this dread. In all parties, she always placed herself amongst the youngest, affecting their manners, conversation and tastes. Added to which, she had acquired a habit of talking aloud to herself on all occasions, alone or in company, revealing her thoughts, sometimes in a ludicrous, sometimes in a dangerous manner, always compromising herself or others.

There was another individual who might be considered an inmate of Tremereus House. He was sure to be found there from four of an afternoon to half-past nine at night. This was the family confessor, L'Abbé Poulot. An inoffensive man, generally of the opinion of the last speaker, *i.e.*, in secular matters, in firmness of dogma, irreproachable. L'Abbé Poulot had replaced for the ladies, in some measure, Anatole de Beaupré. Madlle. Jacqueline and Madlle. Solanges found a joy in their solicitude for his creature comforts; his chocolate in winter, his iced sugar and water in summer. They took care he should have his whist or trictrac every evening; and he, in return, regaled them with all the religious gossip of the department. They were the first to know when there was a recalcitrant vicaire to punish, or of any disagreement between the préfet and the curé; in short, of all that went on in the sacristy. The Abbé regulated not only the spiritual, but the worldly affairs of the sisters, looked after the felling of

their woods, after their vines, paid their labourers, and saw to the bottling of their wine. They could not have done without the Abbé Poulot, and for him they now made the sacrifices they had once made for Anatole.

And the Abbé was as much attached to the "ladies" as his nature allowed. He would probably have sat in his peculiar seat, evening after evening, even if the chocolate or iced drink, or whist or trictrac had been wanting. The great passion of his nature was satisfied by finding himself, he a born peasant, the equal, nay treated as a superior, by ladies whose noble ancestors had mated with the De Rohans and the Montmorencys.

At the moment when this story opens, Anatole de Beaupré was about again to inhabit Tremereus House. He was to arrive with his very young bride, for whom the grand suite of rooms of the Rez de Chaussé had been lately arranged.

Fortune had made a pet of Anatole. By a series of unexpected deaths, he had inherited the title and fortune of a distant relative. He had married a noble and well-dowered young lady, and the Minister of State had recommended him to the Préfet of Magny le Sec, as a candidate the Government would be glad to see returned for that town; and the election, much owing to the interest of the Demoiselles de Tremereus with the clergy, had taken place.

The Vicomte de Beaupré was not troubled by one qualm of conscience as to his conduct towards Virginie. At the present moment, he believed that in offering to rent the lower part of Tremereus House (the most desirable apartment in the town), he was surpassingly generous.

"It will add something to the poor old souls' comfort," he said to the *prefet* in his most portentous voice.

The once handsome young man had changed as much as the "poor old souls." The abundant black hair had thinned and grizzled, the side locks had to be carefully brushed upwards to cover an incipient baldness. His fine figure had acquired an obesity which made walking or riding inconvenient; he had the look of a man doomed to apoplexy.

And his bride — "A mere chit," said Mademoiselle Virginie unconsciously aloud, as she made her curtsy to the young stranger.

M. de Beaupré stared long at Mademoiselle Virginie; then turning to Jacqueline, tapped his forehead significantly and carelessly. It was tragical for Mademoiselle Jacqueline to see cause and effect face to face, and cause so comfortably self-satisfied and prosperous.

The town had been electrified by the news that a

vicomtesse — and of the undoubted “vieille roche” — was coming to reside among them. One lady, noted for her superior intelligence, remarked “that society had now found its natural head.”

When “society saw its natural head,” it was very much taken aback. Little Madame de Beaupré had entirely the appearance of a child, and of a frightened child. Society thought she looked fitter to be in leading strings than to lead.

Society had believed M. de Beaupré to be a man of sense? Such a marriage was downright madness. And the girl's parents, what had they been thinking of?

“Ah! the girl had no parents. She was an orphan, taken from the convent of the Visitandines, three months ago, by Madame d'Auberive d'Esbryat, her tall great-aunt, and married to M. le Vicomte de Beaupré.”

Does any one believe it difficult to persuade a girl of seventeen into any marriage? Madame la Comtesse d'Esbryat was not that person. She told the poor little half-nun Thérèse, that her father had committed suicide; that her mother was never to be mentioned, and that the only thing for her to do was to marry the rich Vicomte de Beaupré. Marriage was a duty, not a pleasure.

After the first general disappointment as to Madame de Beaupré's capabilities as a leader, there followed a

reaction. Madame Martaud took to patronizing the little Vicomtesse.

Madame Martaud was the lady of Magny le Sec who disputed the sceptre of supremacy with the Demoiselles de Tremereus. The superiority they had in birth, Madame Martaud had in money.

Madame Martaud was not wanting in cleverness. She checkmated any possibility of Madame de Rochefort, the Préfet's wife, or the Demoiselles de Tremereus, making her feel she was not of their caste, by speaking of herself as a *bourgeoise* — even a *petite bourgeoise*. "We of the *bourgeoise*," was her pet phrase.

Madame Martaud was most respectful to the ladies de Tremereus. Her folding doors opened for them as they did for Madame la Préfette. But she had never forgotten the slight the sisters put on her at her *première communion*, when as Julia Oudin she had been chosen as Mademoiselle Solanges' companion. It is the custom in France for girls of the higher classes to choose girls of the lower orders to be their partners, so to speak, on that solemn occasion — a public manifestation of humility which covers private pride. Mademoiselle Solanges and Julie had therefore made their *première communion* together; but afterwards Mademoiselle Solanges had refused even so much as to enter the doors of Madame Oudin, who was at the head of a thriving manufacture of knitted goods. Times had changed. Julia Oudin, as Madame Martaud, had entered the *haute volée*. It

had been a day of unmitigated triumph to her, when the Demoiselles de Tremereus had accepted her invitation to breakfast with her without ceremony. "The ladies" never went out to dinner, and rarely vouchsafed their presence in the evening, so that their acceptance of an invitation was an event.

Madame Martaud had begun by an invitation in the third person, which the sisters had formally declined.

Madame Martaud then wrote a letter of four pages, couched in the warmest terms. "It was to meet Monseigneur — it would be such an honour — a *reminiscence* of when as children they had knelt together before the altar. There were no friendships like those begun in childhood — it would make her happy. She wrote from her heart — from her full heart."

The Demoiselles de Tremereus put forward their habits of seclusion — their rule of never eating out of their own house — on which Madame Martaud, braving a tremendous storm, suddenly appeared in the Demoiselles' salon.

A very handsome woman was Madame Martaud, with a command of words remarkable even in a French woman; never, not one half second of hesitation in her flow of reasoning. Perhaps she was indiscreet, but her happiness was at stake — her heart spoke out of its depths. Madame Martaud talked herself hoarse, but she gained her point. Mademoiselle de Tremereus and

Mademoiselle Solanges promised to make an exception for her.

"A party of friends, only of friends," were the parting words of the husky petitioner.

"And if you will believe me, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Mademoiselle Solanges to Monsieur Poulot the same evening, "there was the Préfet and his wife, and Monseigneur—her intimate friends indeed!—and everything had been sent from Paris—Victoire heard it from the cook—pine-apples for which she paid their weight in gold."

Madame Martaud after that morning felt that she had revenged the humiliations suffered some thirty years before.

The bride accepted the attentions and advice tendered her by Madame Martaud with the same tranquillity. "Never was there a nicer little mouse," said the rich bourgeoisie.

Within the year the Vicomtesse had a little girl.

"It actually seems wrong," said all the ladies.

After the birth of the child Madame de Beaupré was more in Paris than at Magny le Sec, which so annoyed society that it began to pity Monsieur de Beaupré, and shake its head at the thought of all the court balls and other terrible temptations of the capital. "Considering the difference of their ages, the Vicomte had better have kept her out of harm's way; people said she was growing very pretty." Whenever Madame

de Beaupré did appear in Magny, the fact of her improved looks was verified with holy suspicion.

She was certainly very pretty, with lovely long brown eyes, a quantity of silky dark hair, a complexion like the petals of a *fleur de lis*, and a sweet child's mouth — one of those small women who seem born to be petted and caressed.

"It's monstrous to think of that old De Beaupré as her husband. The best service he can render her is to die," were the comments of every young man of their acquaintance.

But Monsieur de Beaupré went on living, apparently well satisfied so to do. He was the best-tempered man in the world, so that he had a dinner to his taste, and was never contradicted. He could not bear to be disturbed in any of his ways or ideas. Everything that was, was right. As for listening to argument, he couldn't and wouldn't. He could always overpower his adversary, for nature had gifted him with a portentous thickness of skull, and a portentous voice. When he had shouted some half-dozen times, "I can't see it," his opponent understood the uselessness of the combat.

It was in the fifth year of their marriage that Monsieur de Beaupré informed Madame that it had been intimated to him that the most prominent citizens of Magny le Sec were desirous he should offer himself as a candidate in the approaching election for a new

mayor. M. de Beaupré considered that if he were elected mayor, it would add to his political value. "I have plans for the future—I may say, expectations—which make my popularity in the department of consequence," he roared to his wife, who was sitting within arm's length of him.

M. de Beaupré never cared much for any answers from Madame de Beaupré. He had married to have a child to inherit his vast possessions. Thérèse had accomplished this task, and he required nothing else from her, not even a reply when he spoke to her.

He went on, "I must give a couple of dinners and a ball."

"It is very near Lent," said the lady.

"Allow me sometimes to have my own way, Madame de Beaupré. There are cases, I assure you, when a man is best judge of what is befitting his station in life. I don't often interfere with your arrangements and decisions, this time I really must act the master; and Thérèse, *ma bonne*, remember this, when a woman wishes to lead a man of sense, she must take a round-about way—make a circuit, you understand."

"I thought a straight line was the shortest from point to point," said Thérèse in her usual quiet voice.

"Ho! what? pray, what can you know about straight or crooked lines?" roared the Vicomte, rising and stretching himself so as to show all the mighty convexity of his figure. "He, he, hi,—do you know

you were repeating a mathematical problem. I say, my child, do you know what a right angle is?"

Thérèse coolly drew a demonstration.

"In the name of God who taught you all that?"

"Sœur Leocadie."

"Wrong — decidedly wrong. What business have nuns and women with mathematics. What good have they done you, Madame de Beaupré, I beg to ask?"

CHAPTER II.

The Consequences of a Mass in Music.

THE arrival of Monsieur and Madame de Beaupré in Magny le Sec was always the signal for a series of dinners and evening parties. Madame de Beaupré's salon, after two o'clock, was invariably full. She was, in very truth, the cynosure of all the eyes of her lady visitors: not a fold of her gown, not a twist of her hair, but underwent a scrutiny; there was a feminine fever to see how she dressed.

Most of the ladies of the town paid an annual visit to Paris; but their knowledge of the fashions was, on the whole, derived from shop-windows and from what they saw on the stage. Provincial belles have very little in common with the *grand monde* of the capital: they always manage to be beside the mark. But Madame de Beaupré was herself a "grande dame" of the *grand monde*, with all the rights and privileges appertaining to that state of life. No one certainly would think of going to her for advice on any subject; but there could be no doubt that between her dress-maker and her lady's-maid her gowns were "exquisite," and that her bonnets looked as if produced by fairy fingers — such a "freshness" about them!

Before leaving Paris, M. de Beaupré had condescended to bawl to his wife, that he wished her to be very civil to all his constituents. He expected her to show an interest in the subjects that interested them; and if there were any families on whom she had never yet called, she was now to remedy the oversight. She must exert herself; she would easily find people to help her. She could not do better than seek for knowledge and advice from the Demoiselles de Tremereus — they heard everything that was going on in the town. They had his interests at heart. It was his wish that she should be more with those ladies — they were safe companions. Remarking a certain rounding of Madame la Vicomtesse's lovely long eyes at this recommendation, M. de Beaupré added, testily, —

“There's nothing so extraordinary, I believe, in my request; but as soon as a woman is married she makes up her mind always to oppose her husband. *Tu dieu!* a man loses his liberty and gets nothing in return.”

Madame de Beaupré made no answer to this sally. When a woman of twenty can refrain from a retort, you may be sure she has latent strength of will. M. de Beaupré could not quarrel alone, so he finished his lecture by begging his wife to remember that it was of the greatest importance to him to be acquainted with the animus of the inhabitants of Magny le Sec.

As it was the first time that Monsieur de Beaupré

had appeared to consider Thérèse more than the cipher to which he gave value, she was proportionately impressed. She exerted herself beyond his wishes.

Just at the moment of their return to Tremereus house, the town was in a state of civil war as to its two professors of music.

Monsieur Dardare had been giving lessons for the last five-and-twenty years; Jules Frankomme only during the last lustre of Monsieur Dardare's reign.

Monsieur Dardare had taught all the most distinguished mothers of the rising generation, and consequently enjoyed a monopoly of their distinguished daughters. Monsieur Dardare had just as much musical talent as a musical box, whereas Frankomme was a born musician, which is quite another affair from being a made one. He had talent, *le feu sacré*, and industry. Nevertheless the distinguished mammas of Magny le Sec would not patronize him. Why had he come? Who wanted him? Every door of the *élite* was hermetically closed against the young intruder.

"He will have to go: he can't manage to live on lessons to the girls of bakers and shoemakers. "Monsieur Dardare had said this, year after year, and yet there still was the indomitable Frankomme; and the mad young fellow had dared to marry on his prospects — and such prospects!

Madame de Beaupré had been bidden to interest herself in what interested the town, and to cultivate

Mademoiselle Virginie de Tremeren's society. Rousing herself to obey both mandates, the little Vicomtesse asked the third member of the 150 if really this M. Frankomme was a monster to be got rid of?

"Undoubtedly; he is not wanted in Magny. He is the cause of a deal of disturbance."

While Madame de Beaupré was concocting another question, she was startled by hearing Miss Virginie say, in a muffled voice, —

"If she thinks to get the truth out of me, she is very much mistaken, — a stupid child."

A momentary silence ensued, then Mademoiselle Virginie fixed her eyes with an anxious stare on Madame de Beaupré, and said, —

"I beg your pardon; you were speaking."

"No, I said nothing," returned Madame de Beaupré, hardly able to repress a laugh.

It was not the first time Madame de Beaupré had heard Mademoiselle Virginie unconsciously reveal her private sentiments, but never before had she been so diverted as by to-day's confession. And to think that she should not dare to tell anyone that she had been called "stupid child" to her very face. Out of girlish glee, she endeavoured to continue the conversation; but Mademoiselle Virginie had conceived a suspicion that she had already been indiscreet, and took her leave.

It is a melancholy fact that as soon as we allow

our heart to dictate a course of action to us, we are almost sure to get ourselves and others into a scrape. The practice of life teaches us to be egotists. What does the man of fifty say to a petitioner? "My good friend, I have made it a rule never to ask a favour." And the wise mother of a family, who, by holding out even a finger, might save one of her sex from being stranded on a desert island, what does she say? "I am very sorry," (and so she is! her eyes are full of tears,) "but on the whole it is safest not to meddle."

In excuse for Madame de Beaupré following her instinct, there is her youth and inexperience to plead. Up to this time she had never been allowed to act for herself. All at once her husband had desired her to play a part, and, as if on purpose to give her an opportunity of doing so, she perceived what could be called nothing less than a persecution of an innocent person. Had twenty years more rolled over her head, she would have pitied M. Frankomme and taken care not to pronounce a word in his favour. As it was, she drove that very day to the young Professor's house, and took Madame Frankomme quite by surprise.

Thérèse was, however, the most embarrassed of the two. Madame Frankomme had all the confidence of a happy woman — of one accustomed to consideration in her own family. She brought her baby to be admired; but the object of her most overweening pride was her husband. Madame de Beaupré, still possessed

by the idea of M. Frankomme being in danger of starvation, said, timidly, that she should be glad if M. Frankomme could give her some lessons during the time she had to pass at Magny. Madame Frankomme puffed out her throat like a proud pigeon, and answered, she was sure her husband would do what he could, but his time was so occupied (and then he did not like leaving her alone so constantly; he was always so anxious about her). When he came home, if she did not feel inclined to talk and to laugh, he fancied she was dull, and he could not stand that; and it was difficult to be merry when you had been left alone all day. Only to hear Madame Frankomme pronounce her husband's name was a revelation of love.

Madame de Beaupré sat on, listening with interest. When the Professor's wife stopped to take breath, the Vicomtesse said, "But you are very happy."

"He is so good, such a heart!" was the reply. Suddenly Madame Frankomme reddened and exclaimed, "I hear his step." The next instant there was an impatient call, "Marie, Marie, where are you?"

"He always expects me to go and meet him," explained Marie.

"Pray, go," said Madame de Beaupré. As she spoke, the door opened, and M. Frankomme came in, all in a heat and hurry. He started at the sight of his wife seated in familiar conversation with the greatest lady of the town. His bright eyes asked as plainly as eyes

could do, what was the meaning of all this? It was Madame Frankomme who gave him an explanation. Madame de Beaupré added, with polite untruth, that she had long wished to make M. Frankomme's acquaintance.

In all provincial places in France, the smallest official has not only a right, but it is his duty, to leave a card on the highest functionary. M. Frankomme, as one of the organists of the town, had fulfilled this duty; but M. de Beaupré had not troubled himself even to send a card in return — an unusual piece of rudeness in a Frenchman. M. Frankomme, therefore, was not inclined to be Madame de Beaupré's most obedient servant. On being made, however, to understand that she wished to have lessons from him, his heart gave a bound; he felt that his evil days were over once he became known as the Vicomtesse de Beaupré's music-master. He examined his note-book and told her, with apparent calm, what hours on certain days he had free, and Madame de Beaupré engaged to take three lessons a week.

"I am afraid I shall try your patience," she said, deprecatingly; "I never could manage octaves."

"Ah! but with a little practice you will be able," pronounced Madame Frankomme, as if she were an infallible authority. Madame de Beaupré went home in that state of pleasant excitement which follows the performance of some good action. She had not taken her

second lesson before the fact was patent to all Magny le Sec.

M. Dardare and his patronesses were furious; it was an insult, a challenge; all the ladies who administered a weekly dose of flattery to the Vicomtesse felt as if they had received a slap in the face. They had not the courage to quarrel openly with Madame de Beaupré, "but if she imagined she was going to lay down the law for them, she would find herself vastly mistaken." The list of Madame de Beaupré's blunders and offences was not yet closed.

Though M. Frankomme did not find Madame de Beaupré endowed with a hitherto undeveloped genius for music, he discovered that she undoubtedly possessed some talent for doing kind things. Scarcely a lesson but she had some toy or cake to send to his child. At last, one day, he confided to her that he had composed a mass, and that he desired above all things to get it performed in the cathedral at Pentecost.

"Shall I ask M. le Curé?" asked the Vicomtesse with the ingenuous voice and look of a little girl.

"Oh, Madam, if you would be so good," returned the young composer, and she was sure there were tears in his eyes.

"Certainly; she would ask, and do all she could to oblige him; was he not so very patient with her bad playing?"

"That Vicomtesse of yours," said Frankomme to

his wife, "is an angel in disguise, and this stupid town talks of her as if she were an idiot."

The Curé granted Madame de Beaupré's request, and assured her Monsieur Frankomme should have every opportunity of letting his mass be heard to advantage. The promise was made, of course, under the impression that in obeying Madame de Beaupré he was obliging monsieur her husband.

The Curé was better than his word; he used his influence with the choristers of the cathedral, he attended the rehearsals himself, and ended by taking the composer into such special favour as to persuade one of his penitents, a young lady with a delicious voice, to sing the solo in the "Agnus Dei."

Here was a schism! a secession! a desertion to the enemy's camp! The only person in Magny whose tranquillity was not disturbed, was M. de Beaupré, to whom no one as yet had had courage to reveal his wife's signal folly. Who could have believed, to see her, that she had so much mischief in her?

At last the fatal Sunday arrived. The cathedral was crowded with evil wishers. M. Frankomme knew this, and almost regretted that he had ventured on the trial. He sought to gain courage by looking for sympathy from Madame de Beaupré. He said to himself, "If I catch her eye and she smiles, all will go well," and then fixed his own powerful orbs on the back of her head. Yielding to some magnetic power, she turned,

saw him, and smiled. The young man drew a long breath, glanced towards his wife, sitting in the organ-loft as pale as ashes, and seized a roll of music as his conductor's baton.

There could be no doubt the music *was* good. From the first notes of the "Gloria," on through the "Sanctus," "Benedictus," it increased in interest, until it culminated gloriously in the "Agnus Dei." Those who had gone to scoff were reduced to ignominious silence. Madame de Beaupré leaning upon M. de Beaupré's arm, waited at the great door to compliment the professor, and M. de Beaupré instinctively and incautiously added his congratulations to those of his wife. Every one standing near did the same; it was an undisguised triumph. "A young man of talent," affirmed the Receiver General; and "a young man of talent" was repeated by various echoes.

"I do hope that Monsieur Frankomme will get on now," observed Madame de Beaupré at dinner.

"Why, what is it to you?" bawled the Vicomte.

Madame de Beaupré answered timidly, —

"Because that old Monsieur Dardare wants to keep him down, to starve him."

M. de Beaupré stared at his wife; what had come to her that she had an idea of her own. After the scrutiny of a couple of minutes, he shouted louder than usual, —

"You are not to be taking any side, do you hear,

in the trumpery quarrels of the town; what's it to you whether one man or another starves? You are to have nothing more to do with this music-master."

"May I not go on with my lessons?"

"No; or take them from Dardare; he is a man of influence here."

Madame de Beaupré retreated into a prudent silence with a presentiment that the matter had not ended.

The next day the local newspaper contained a bitter attack against Frankomme's mass. The attack was cleverly answered; a paper war ensued, in the course of which transparent hints and allusions were not spared as to undue influence, patronage, and petticoat government.

M. de Beaupré's supporters explained to him the error the Vicomtesse had committed by patronizing M. Frankomme, and sent the Vicomte home in a rage. He scolded his wife before the servants just as any carter or ploughman might have done.

One of the Dardarite ladies persuaded or forced her husband to vote against M. de Beaupré. The Vicomte's rival was elected *maire* by a majority of *one* vote.

The evening of the day of his defeat, the Vicomte had an attack of sanguine apoplexy; he lingered three days in a state of unconsciousness, on the fourth he had ceased to breathe.

"On dira que c'est toi qui l'as tué. They will say you killed him," said Madame Frankomme to her husband.

"Not at all, it was Dardare," he replied.

"Madame de Beaupré will hate thee all the rest of her life," said the happy young wife.

"Ma foi, I don't know," he replied, his eyes laughing mischievously. "She is still quite young, and he was old and awfully disagreeable. We are all instruments, you know, in the hands of Providence, working out each other's fate unconsciously. Who could have supposed my mass would have cost the Vicomte de Beaupré his election, and made a widow of his wife."

"You are not to talk so to anybody but me," said Madame Frankomme, seized with a sudden alarm.

"Who but you accused me?" he asked. "I wonder whether Dardare will condescend to play the organ at his funeral. Considering what you have suggested, I had rather not."

It was however M. Jules Frankomme who had to play the "De Profundis" and the "Dies Iræ" for the deceased "très noble et très puissant seigneur, le Vicomte de Beaupré, Baron de Souliat," &c. &c.

CHAPTER III.

Angelo and the Governess.

THE news of Monsieur de Beaupré's death exploded like a bomb in the town. There was a general consternation. The partisans of Dardare had wished to punish, not to kill their member outright; and an impression prevailed that the Vicomte's disappointment as to the mayoralty had occasioned his fatal apoplexy. As his death, however, could never be brought home to any individual, Magny le Sec was not long in recovering its equilibrium.

How the good folks did talk! what discussions about Madame de Beaupré! what speculations as to her income, as to where she would live, as to how soon she would marry again, and whom? What reports without one word of truth were circulated. Everybody knew that there had been a *conseil de famille*, and that the Vicomtesse was to pass the term of her widowhood in the convent of the Visitandines at Paris. A week after, it was equally certain that she was, by the will, obliged to remain in Tremereus House, under the supervision of "the ladies," or lose the guardianship of her child.

When the first visits of condolence were paid, what

comments were made. You might have supposed Madame de Beaupré on her trial. Madame Chuquet, the superior of the congregation or society of "Les Mères Chrétiennes," professed herself scandalized by the want of propriety displayed in the Vicomtesse's mourning.

"Her dress, my dear, extra wide, extra long, and her cap! it had streamers down to her heels. It was miraculous how any woman who had lost a husband, and *such* a husband, could have her hair so becomingly arranged." Madame Chuquet was quite for making a votive offering of Madame de Beaupré's silken locks.

In the middle of all this hubbub, the Vicomtesse and her little girl went away one morning quietly. For two years all that Magny le Sec knew about her was, that the rent of the Rez de Chaussée of Tremereus House was regularly paid to "the ladies," and that not a scrap of furniture had been removed.

The under current of fraternal feeling flowing through human nature manifested itself again towards Madame de Beaupré, by the wonder every one felt that the Vicomtesse did not sub-let her apartment. Monsieur le Trésorier General would have been glad to have it.

Madame Chuquet did not at all conceal that she thought this paying for what she did not use testified to Madame de Beaupré's want of common sense, and

indeed a want of proper care for the interests of her child. If there was one thing more silly than another, it was carelessness about money.

At the end of the two years the Demoiselles de Tremereus suddenly announced that the Vicomtesse was about to return. She would certainly pass the summer and autumn at Magny. Little Berthe had been very ill. Sea air had been tried without success, and the doctors had now recommended a sojourn of some months in a vine country. A fashionable German doctor had recommended that the child should try the grape cure.

Madame de Beaupré was in Tremereus House before the news that she was coming was nine days old. Turner's famous patch of red did not produce a more startling effect in his picture, than our young Vicomtesse's presence on Magny le Sec.

The sober streets, used to the quiet sleepy trot of Madame Martaud's old greys, almost white from age, or to the respectable and dignified roll of the prefecture calèche, had to get accustomed to the dash and whirl of Madame de Beaupré's blue coupé with the high-stepping horses, that seemed to dance, and to the tall, powdered footmen. The shopkeepers had to master their disgust and surprize when Madame de Tessin, first cousin to Madame de Beaupré, appeared, driving her long-tailed, cream-coloured ponies. Well, they never — no, never, had thought respectable ladies could go

on so; have such hats, and such dresses; they looked for all the world, those two great ladies, like circus dancers.

The quiet stern old house was made to shelter the maddest freaks. Private theatricals, charades, and dancing, were sober amusements. Madame la Vicomtesse had hide-and-seek and blind-man's-buff parties. There were several young men of family among the Government employés, both in Magny le Sec and in the neighbouring towns, distant by railway not more than an hour, and they were always at Madame de Beaupré's orders. She had no want of courtiers to aid and abet her. "The very demon of folly seemed to possess her," said Mademoiselle de Tremereus.

The noise and the revels had been bad enough, but there was yet a greater trial in store for the rigidly Catholic sisters.

One fine day an English governess arrived: English! and Protestant!!

This was beyond levity; it was a sacrilegious act. What! confide a Catholic child to a Huguenot woman, a Calvinist, a Unitarian. The Demoiselles de Tremereus were more zealous than well informed. It should never be said that a Tremereus witnessed an attack on the Church without an effort to repulse it. Mademoiselle de Tremereus dressed herself in the severest mourning, and went to remonstrate with Madame de Beaupré.

"*Mon Dieu!* such a modest, well-behaved young woman as she had been in Monsieur de Beaupré's lifetime. How had such a metamorphosis taken place? It was not to be believed — not to be believed."

Mademoiselle de Tremereus found Madame de Beaupré and Madame de Tessin busy with patterns for dresses just received from Paris.

After the usual ceremonious salutations, Mademoiselle de Tremereus hemmed and said, —

"She had thought it her duty to come and say to Madame de Beaupré's face, what others were saying behind her back. Would Madame de Beaupré be kind enough to state distinctly of what religion her governess was."

"Protestant, isn't she, Suzette?" asked Madame de Beaupré of her cousin.

"Yes — Protestant."

"And you mean to keep her, to let her have the charge of Mademoiselle de Beaupré?" asked Mademoiselle de Tremereus, with quivering lips.

"I never thought about the lady's religion," answered the Vicomtesse, unmoved. "The only condition I made was that she should not be pretty. You see I am really prudent. She isn't the least pretty."

"And you have no anxiety, no fear for the soul of your only child?" interrogated Mademoiselle Tremereus.

"No, not in the least, Mademoiselle."

"I shall take the pink; you had better have the blue gauze, Thérèse," called out Madame de Tessin.

"Blue suits fair people best," returned Madame de Beaupré; "let me have the pink. Have you seen the last fashions, Mademoiselle de Tremereus?" and she carried some of the coloured prints of the *Mode Illustrée* to the old lady. "Lovely, are they not?"

"I am no judge, Madame de Beaupré. Allow me to speak my mind; it is for the sake of one dear to me, and who ought to be dear to you. I feel it my duty to let you know that not only I (a stupid old woman in your eyes), but every one in Magny le Sec blames you. Now, my conscience is clear."

"Thank you, a thousand times, dear Mademoiselle, for telling me disagreeable truths. If it had been anybody else but you I shouldn't have believed them. Every one is so civil and flattering; always coming to see me, and overpowering me with invitations. What a bad, deceitful world this is!"

"There is one undeniable truth, Madame de Beaupré," said Mademoiselle Tremereus, flushing, and stiffening her whole person. "M. le Curé told us last Sunday that our smallest actions have their consequences."

"Well, even such a goose as I am can understand that. For instance, if I wear the blue Madame de Tessin recommends so strongly, the consequence would be I should look a fright, just what in secret she de-

sires. If Berthe has an English governess she will learn English."

"I shall say no more; I have done my duty," began Mademoiselle de Tremereus.

"That is what you always have done," interrupted Madame de Beaupré, with mingled compunction and vexation.

"Allow me to finish what I was going to say," recommenced Mademoiselle de Tremereus. "If I have ventured to interfere in your concerns, it is for the sake of the departed. We were brought up together: he had confidence in me. I know what were his sentiments. It's enough to bring him out of his grave the way things are going."

The faces of Madame de Beaupré and Mademoiselle de Tremereus would have been a study for a painter; the vague uneasy fear on that of the former, the pale stern sorrow on that of the latter. She was one of those women who, with strong tenacious affections, a great power of loving, go through life without ever exciting the feeling most desired, most prized by every daughter of Eve. Unknown martyrs to a want of gracefulness of mind and body, victims to the absence of the *je ne sais quoi*.

Mademoiselle de Tremereus rose to take her leave with a shaking out of her plumage, that is of her thick black silk dress, that had all the air of one shaking

the dust from her head and shoulders as well as her feet.

"Perhaps Mademoiselle Virginie would like to see the latest fashions," said Madame de Beaupré, in a spirit of conciliation, offering some of the illustrations of the book of fashions.

"Thank you. Virginie does not go to masquerades;" and having shot this Parthian dart, the old lady retreated.

"Never, if I live till the Day of Judgment," she said that evening to l'Abbé Poulot, "shall I believe that Anatole's marriage was a happy one. That Comtesse d'Auberive has much to answer for."

So she had; but not in the sense Mademoiselle de Tremereus meant. She had, so to say, tarnished a pure human soul entrusted to her guardianship. No woman marries a man without loving him but has her moral sense obscured. She has been placed, or has placed herself, on the broad path which leads to destruction.

As soon as Mademoiselle de Tremereus was out of hearing, Madame de Beaupré said, "I rather like that old woman."

Madame de Tessin, who was standing before a mirror arranging her hair according to one of the whimsical pictures of the "Petit Courier," answered, "I am not partial to acids, but, Thérèse, don't let Berthe be made a Protestant, you would find it so difficult to

marry her well. The men of to-day have such a fancy for religion in their wives. Auguste de Malonet, one of the worst of them, married a girl only because she was always in churches."

"Please to remember, my dear, that my daughter is not yet six years old. I got this governess because Madame d'Auberive worried me so about living alone. She wanted me to have her old cousin. I excused myself by saying I meant to take an Englishwoman so that Berthe might learn English — that was the first reason. The second was I thought she wouldn't understand French well enough to be a restraint; but she does; she knows everything, I believe."

"Why don't you marry again, Thérèse?" asked Madame de Tessin, after a pause.

"Because I have been married already," was the laughing answer. "Now, Suzette, tell me, did you ever meet a man who really cared for his wife? My experience goes the other way. I don't believe a man *can* care only for one woman. I have had such confidences. You remember poor Eugenie Malleville — how desperately in love with her Ernest de Hauterive was as long as her husband was alive? Well, he told her frankly, just before they married, that he should be horribly jealous if she so much as smiled on anyone save himself, but that she was not to be in fits, and to suppose he did not love her if he permitted

himself an occasional caprice. Now do you call that justice?"

"My charming, men *are* monsters, but we can't do without them."

And then the two pretty cousins set to work to pull their male acquaintances to pieces. How they did laugh at this one and the other; with what subtlety they detected weaknesses; how they put their taper fingers on hypocrisy here, vanity, selfishness, there. Men in private are always sufficiently severe on women. Manly weapons were blunt compared to those used this morning by these little Vicomtesses, who were generally supposed to be "*tant soit peu, sottes.*"

"And to think we dress and grimace all for the admiration of such poor creatures!" summed up Madame de Beaupré.

"It's the fault of our dreadful human nature, my Thérèse," explained Madame de Tessin.

"My Englishwoman hasn't much human nature," observed Madame de Beaupré. "What a figure she makes of herself. She never seems to care how she looks. I have seen her sit in a blaze of sunlight, which showed all her freckles, and Gustave Godard staring at her as if he were counting them. He said afterwards he couldn't decide whether she was sublime or ridiculous."

Madame de Beaupré was more amused than pleased

with her English duenna. The "oppositions of race" would be a diverting subject for an essay. Such near neighbours as we English and French are, yet so fundamentally unlike.

After the first shock of surprise and distaste was over, Madame de Beaupré watched Miss Christian Power with an interest and curiosity somewhat akin to that which Baker and Speke must have felt in making acquaintance with King Kamryassa.

Miss Power's matutinal cold bath, her persistency in opening all the windows of the apartment, her thick boots and short petticoats, her long daily solitary walks, her reserve, her methodical habits, her constant reading, were all as strange customs to Madame de Beaupré as that of beheading so many wives before breakfast to the discoverers of the sources of the Nile.

"She reads till my eyes ache for her, and she is so fidgety, and does so worry about Berthe being disciplined, and that when *once* I have said No, it is never to be Yes; and that she is to be sent to bed at seven o'clock every evening, and to have no bon-bons. I dare not give the child so much as a lump of sugar. And if I have the tiniest spot on my gown, this Mees comes up, and says, 'Permit me, Madame, to tell you that there is some grease on your dress.'" This was the account the Vicomtesse gave to everyone of the Englishwoman.

Miss Power, on her side, wrote to her friends, Pasteur Savoisie and his wife, in these terms: —

“I am more comfortable than you would imagine in this house of folly and misrule. It seems like a dream that people of the same species as we are, can live so carelessly; indifferent to aught else than amusing themselves; always in a state of excitement, always struggling to get rid of ennui by means of dress or company. And what conversation! always about people.

“I have scarcely seen Madame de Beaupré open a book, even a novel, since I came. Sometimes she takes a whim to learn English, and makes me tell her the names of the furniture in the room, but as for studying, she cannot. And yet she says, as all these Frenchwomen do, clever things, and I hear her constantly called *très spirituelle*. It is not to be denied, however, that she is extremely pretty, and as coquettish as she is pretty.

“What I cannot pardon in her is that she seems to love her dog, a creature about the size of a rat, more than she does her lovely little girl. That does make me indignant.

“For myself personally I have no cause to complain. She, who appears to acknowledge no rule but her pleasure, treats me with respect and good-nature.”

Miss Power prided herself on her frankness and sincerity. Not for all this world has to give would she have been guilty of flattery. The mode she adopted

to prove her independence with Madame de Beaupré was to insult Angelo, the little Mexican dog. Now every other person of Thérèse's acquaintance made a point of adoring Angelo. Miss Power, on the contrary, never so much as vouchsafed it a friendly pat, though the little shivering animal would stand before her with beseeching eyes that gradually filled with tears as she frowned sternly on him.

Angelo was as little fond of walking as his mistress, therefore it could only have been from a spirit of contradiction, or the caprice of a spoiled dog, that he one day followed Miss Power, when she went out to take her "constitutional," under "Les Saules." This was a public promenade, bordered on one side by the river, and on the other by the Champs de Mars, the exercising ground for the soldiers.

When Miss Power saw that Angelo had broken bounds, she had a passing inclination to lift him up and carry him, but she resisted the weakness, and left him to trot painfully along on his four little weak legs. She did not even so much as moderate her pace on his account. How it happened she never could explain, for her back was turned, but a shrill canine cry making her look round, she beheld Angelo tossing in the water.

It was the worst place the poor little beast could have chosen for his immersion — there, just at the end of the walk, where the back-water from a mill rushes

madly into the river. Angelo looked like a ball of white wool, as the eddy rolled him over and over.

Miss Power screamed almost as loudly as the Vicomtesse herself would have done under the circumstances. She was in agony at the sight of the helpless creature perishing before her eyes.

A soldier passing by, attracted by the screams, came to the Englishwoman's side, stood for an instant looking at the drowning Angelo, then, without a word, threw his cap on the ground, stripped off his jacket, and jumped into the rushing water. It had been bad enough to see a dog in danger of death, but a man Christian Power clasped her hands and prayed loudly and earnestly.

The soldier was young and strong, and a good swimmer, so he and the unlucky Angelo were soon on the bank in safety.

"I am so much obliged to you, so grateful, I mean," said Miss Power, with white cheeks and trembling lips, as she received the shivering dog into her shawl. With an instinct that she ought to do something to show her gratitude, she put her hand into her pocket and drew out her purse. Catching sight of the face of the soldier, she let Angelo and the purse drop.

"Raymond — Raymond Savoisy," and she grasped his hand in hers.

The young soldier, pressing the hands he held affectionately, said in his turn —

“Who would have thought of our meeting here. The last news I had of you, you were in Boulogne.”

“That trial is over,” she said, “but oh! Raymond, you are dripping wet. You must not stand still, put on your jacket and let us walk. Only suppose you should catch your death of cold on account of this horrid animal. I shall hate him now worse than ever.”

“Poor little brute,” said Raymond, picking up Angelo, and beginning to rub him with his great brown hand. “Tell me quickly where you are, Christian, and if I may come and see you. As for our being seen walking together — impossible; you could not remain in Magny twenty-four hours afterwards.”

“I am with Madame de Beaupré,” said Christian.

“What, with the mad Vicomtesse?”

“She isn’t mad at all — only rather silly.”

“What a trick of fate to bring you and Madame de Beaupré together. If my father were here, I don’t believe he would let you remain in her house.”

“Nonsense, Raymond. She is not worse than other rich women of the world — better I should say; more a spoiled child than a bad child. But you shall not stand here another minute. You can come and see me; I am sure Madame de Beaupré won’t object — she is good-nature itself.”

"But when?"

"At your own hour, I shall stay at home all day."

"Dear old Christian, I am so glad to see you again." And Raymond Savois once more pressed her hands in his.

"Now run — do run, Raymond," she said.

The moment he left her, she began to cry — quietly — as those do who have long been acquainted with trouble.

CHAPTER IV.

Christian's Explanation.

CHRISTIAN'S cheeks were of the unusual hue of the red peony when she restored Angelo to Madame de Beaupré's arms, and her eyes (as they always were when she was greatly moved) as green and brilliant as those of Venus when she first emerged from the salt sea waves.

"Angelo has been nearly drowned; he fell into the river."

"Great Heavens, Mademoiselle! and you can tell me so, with such calm."

"A man risked his life to save that of the useless little beast," went on Miss Power, in a tone of decided hostility.

But Madame de Beaupré was too much absorbed in caressing her pet to heed the angry emphasis of the governess's words.

"And was my treasure nearly drowned; he shall never, never again leave his mistress — *mon cœur, mon chat; mon bichon* — kiss, kiss, kiss."

A sound, a significant sound, one she was not accustomed to hear, roused Madame de Beaupré from her absorption; had she really heard an expression of con-

tempt! The Vicomtesse had beautiful lilac-veined eyelids, with long thick fringes. She had a way of studying faces through this species of veil. She did so now, contemplating Miss Power seriously for the space of a minute. Then as if waking out of a reverie, she said, —

“I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle, for not listening to what you were saying.”

“It was scarcely worth your attention, Madame.”

“What you say is always worth hearing, Mademoiselle,” returned Madame de Beaupré; “not my case. I have always been told that I spoke first and thought afterwards. I think that’s why Angelo and I are such good companions; for the sake of my love he overlooks my silly ways.”

This was just one of the Vicomtesse’s speeches which Miss Power never could decide whether it did or did not contain any ulterior meaning. She answered —

“I believe, Madame, that you did not hear me say that a *man* had risked his life to save that of your *dog*.”

“He must be a very good man who did that,” observed the Vicomtesse. “What did you say to him? did you tell him it was my pet, and that I should be glad and ready to reward him. You asked his name, I hope.”

“I didn’t offer him a sou, though he is only a common soldier,” and Christian gave a little toss of

her head. There was a good deal of combativeness in her nature.

"And why not? I am sure he must want money. I am always so sorry for soldiers. Some one told me they only get a sou, or perhaps two sous, a day for pocket-money; and if they smoke, how they manage it is a puzzle to me."

Miss Power burst out laughing — and then she burst out crying.

"What have I said? What have I done?" exclaimed Madame de Beaupré in unfeigned distress. "Indeed, I am very sorry;" and, putting down Angelo, she left the room, only to return with a long thin phial, containing eau de carmes, the infallible French remedy for all nervous attacks — *crises de nerfs*.

Madame de Beaupré carefully measured the dose, a coffee-spoonful on some sugar, in a wine-glass half full of water.

"Pray swallow this, Mademoiselle. It will do you good."

"I don't require anything of the sort," said Miss Power, sternly. "I never fainted or had hysterics in my life; I have no nerves, thank God. I was simply amused by the contrast between the past and the present — poor Raymond!" and Miss Power drew in her breath sharp and hard. "I am sorry to have disturbed you, Madame; if you will allow me, I will go to my own room for a little while," and without

waiting for permission asked, the governess hastened away, leaving the Vicomtesse more perplexed than she had ever been by any of the mystifications of the Gustaves and Anatoles of her acquaintance.

She was still fondling her dog, though cogitating over Miss Power's oddities of manners and words, when visitor after visitor came in, full of the *soirée* at the prefecture the previous evening. They were all young and joyous, not cruelly unmerciful to reputations, but ready to ridicule everything human and divine.

In Madame de Beaupré's salon, every one that was absent received a "tongue-thrust." M. un Tel had told Madame Chose that she reminded him of an aviary, with her bird of paradise in her hair, and canaries on her shoulders; M. B— had declared that Madame C— had forgotten the body of her dress. They called Madame Delbecque Aline Reine de Golconde, because she made such a fuss about her diamonds. Another of their dear friends was compared to a market-gardener's stall, with her decorations of green and red. The men fared no better: the wit of one was in his feet; he could dance, but so could a bear. Young De Migny's collar, where had he got it from? And old De Noisy! had anybody remarked what eyes he made at Madame Ferrail? People had given up talking of them; but after last night, impossible but that tongues would wag again. At last some one asked if "l'Anglaise"

was not going to show herself? Madame Emile Dubois wanted to ask her about Protestant saints.

"She has none; Protestants believe fewer things than Jews," said Anatole Guérin, gravely.

"Oh, Dieu! chère Vicomtesse, and you don't mind having her in the house? Isn't it disagreeable?"

"Sometimes," replied Madame de Beaupré. "I was very near hating her to-day. She let Angelo fall into the river, and instead of being in despair, she scolded me because some man, a common soldier, picked my darling out of the water."

"She's more bizarre than I gave her credit for being," drawled the substitut of the Procureur Impérial, in an ironical tone. "How dared she think the life of a common soldier of more value than that of the semi-divine Angelo!"

Madame de Beaupré peeped at the speaker through her long eye-lashes, just as she had done an hour ago at Christian, and then exclaimed, in her most baby voice, "You are laughing at me; go away, I won't have anything more to say to you."

"Those English are so out of the way," said Madame de Tessin, "so dreadfully fair, so dreadfully tall!"

"Mees is not so ill-looking," observed Gustave.

"What next?" asked Madame de Tessin, herself a small brunette.

"I persist," said the young man, twirling his

moustache, and looking provokingly at Madame de Tessin. "A Cleopatra kind of woman."

There was a burst of laughter, which, ascending to the sombre salon abovestairs, made Mademoiselle de Tremereus wonder aloud what could make those people laugh so; not a thought, no, not one for any serious subject; and time — precious time — fleeting — fleeting

"Cleopatra, I always understood, was a small black woman," observed some one.

"That is a disputed point," said Gustave; "I saw a portrait of her only last year, and I protest it was of a tall fair woman, with ardent hair. Roman women —."

"Egyptian; every one knows she was a gipsy," interrupted Madame de Tessin, scornfully.

"Roman women of her stamp," continued Gustave, gravely, "were wont to dye their hair with carmine; if you don't believe me, ask the Professor of natural philosophy."

"How old is your governess, madam?" asked Madame Dubois. In the provinces the age of a new arrival is always discussed.

"Forty," said Gustave.

"Nonsense! Miss Povère told me she was twenty-nine," answered the Vicomtesse.

"Very strange!" observed Gustave; "but I have never known a woman of thirty — multitudes who were twenty-nine."

"Poor Madame Villefray always says she is thirty-nine, and talks of herself and of me as of the same age," said Madame Dubois, who was really only twenty-two.

"Thirty-nine!" exclaimed a voice. "She is forty-four. Ernestine Decamps, my cousin, is forty, and Henri Bonne is forty-two, and Adèle Villefray was running alone when Henri was in arms. I have heard Madame Bonne tell how she would put her finger in Henri's eyes when he was a baby."

"Her case has been tried fairly, and she is condemned to forty-four," said Gustave.

"I hope we have talked scandal enough," said Madame de Beaupré.

"Truth is generally scandalous," replied Gustave, laughing.

No sooner had Madame de Beaupré's visitors taken their leave, than Miss Power returned to the salon.

"Can you spare me half-an-hour, Madame? I wish to give you an explanation of why I was so overcome this morning."

"Indeed, I don't need any explanation. I am quite satisfied; I am sure you always do right;" and Madame de Beaupré looked up kindly in the tall governess's face.

"You mistake me, Madame. I do not come to excuse myself. I thought you might wish to have it

explained why I said you could not offer a recompense to the man who saved your dog."

"Ah! to be sure, I ought not to forget him. Pray sit down, Mademoiselle, and tell me why I must not send the poor fellow some money." Thérèse noticed an expression of disgust pass over the Englishwoman's mobile features.

"Because he is a gentleman," said Christian; "the superior of every one I ever saw here, or anywhere—a hero—a martyr."

Madame de Beaupré looked alarmed.

"I shall not detain you ten minutes, Madame, but I hold to your hearing Raymond Savoisy's story."

Madame de Beaupré recovered her good breeding and said,—

"We don't understand one another. I believe people never do understand one another. I am not wishing to get rid of you; I am not dreading your story, only I do so hate martyrs."

The shadow of a smile crossed the governess's face, followed by a transient wonder that any one so childish could have already traversed the three great epochs of a woman's life, wifhood, motherhood, and widowhood.

"Come and sit by me and tell me anything you please, Mademoiselle. I am sure your martyr must be more interesting than those we had at the Convent."

Miss Power began at once, "The soldier who saved

Angelo is Raymond Savoisy, the eldest son of the dearest friends I ever had on earth. His father is a pastor of the reformed Church of France. I first met the family at Castelnaudary, ten years ago, the first year I went out as a governess. I was only eighteen then, and had, I suppose, a share of what the French call *la beauté du diable*. I was ignorant as a baby of the ways of mankind, and I should have got into endless trouble but for Monsieur and Madame Savoisy. All country towns gossip, and some gossip about me reached the Savoisys' ears. They did not stay to consider whether or not they were likely to injure themselves by interfering in my behalf. They came at once to the family where I was governess — the most influential people in the town — explained to me the danger threatening me; and, knowing I had nowhere to go, for I am an orphan, offered to take me into their home. And what a home it was. It showed me that there is happiness on earth.

"You don't like martyrs, Madame, and possibly you like saints as little; but you could not have helped reverencing and loving M. Savoisy, had you been in my place. His creed and his practice are in harmony. What he preaches, that he does: the poor and the afflicted are his brethren. He is the single person I have ever seen who gives me an idea of what the apostles must have been. When he was in the pulpit I used to think I saw a glory round his head. The

very priests who hated his doctrine loved his person. But it was when admitted into the intimacy of his family that you learned all the perfection of his character. He was so affectionate, so tender, so benevolent, and so just. Ah! Madame, it is difficult to be really just. Every one within his walls grew good under his influence. If I have any good in me, I owe it to him.

“It is a great deal to say, that Madame Savois is worthy of such a husband; but, indeed, she is. She is a quick-tempered, intelligent woman, easily melted to compassion, and as easily roused to indignation; thorough in everything, thorough wife, thorough mother, thorough friend. The children, five of them, all different — all good — though not born exempted from original sin. Raymond, the eldest — he is of my age — was, when I first knew him, a bright clever boy, full of ambition to rise in his profession. The Savoisys are far from rich; in your eyes, Madame, they would be poor; their generosity and charity never allow them to economize. If the parents loved one child more than another it was Raymond — he was the apple of his mother’s eye.

“Just when they received me into their family, Madame Savois began to have qualms about the conscription; and, in order to lay by money to procure a substitute in case Raymond should draw a bad number, she had decided to take pupils. She thought it pro-

bable that English girls wishing to learn French might be sent to them, for M. Savoisy was well known, by reputation, to the religious world in England.

"But it is always difficult to get what one wants at the right moment; and it was only after months of expectation that a young lady did come to them, and they kept me as a governess for her.

"But at the end of the year she left, and they had been so liberal to her and to me, that very few hundred francs had been laid by, and Raymond was already nineteen. I forgot to tell you he was studying with an architect, and his master said he had first-rate talents."

Here Christian paused, and Madame de Beaupré was going to speak when the governess, with a deprecatory gesture, went on speaking very fast. "As they could not succeed in getting any more girl pupils, they agreed to take a young man, a Swiss, who had been highly recommended to them. That was the beginning of all the trouble, for he fell in love with Salome Savoisy, and M. Savoisy sent him away and would take no more pupils. I was of no more use, and I could not remain a burden, so I went away to a German family.

"In a letter from Madame Savoisy, just before the fatal time for the conscription, she told me that they had resolved, if Raymond got a bad number, to raise money on their house, and get a substitute for him:

and that the other children would not be injured, as the money paid for Raymond would be counted as his portion. Everything went wrong. Salome fell into bad health — fretting. Raymond drew a low number, and the end of it was that the money which had been intended to buy him off was given for Salome's *dot*. Raymond insisted on this."

"Ah! now I understand. The soldier who rescued Angelo was this Monsieur Raymond. I said he must be a good man," and Madame de Beaupré's lovely eyes were full of tears. "What came of his mother?"

"It all but killed her outright. Her life hangs on his."

"But he can go back to her when he has served his time?"

"And how is he to make up for these seven years? As an architect his career is ruined; the only thing he can do is to turn ploughman," said Christian, bitterly. Then she added, "I have troubled you with all this, Madame, because I wish for your permission to see him sometimes."

"See him! To be sure, whenever you please. I must see him myself to thank him about Angelo. Tell him to come whenever he pleases. I will ask him to dinner."

"You forget that he is only a common soldier, Madame."

"No, I don't. But I shall get him made an

officer: that will comfort his poor mother and you, will it not?"

"You are good, really good," said Miss Power, and suddenly kissed one of Madame de Beaupré's tiny unserviceable-looking hands.

"I may tell every one the story, mayn't I? And I shall insist on his being received everywhere. I always do what I set my heart on."

Of all things that could have been proposed, nothing more distasteful to Christian than this project, could have been discovered. It was exasperating to her to imagine all the inanities that would be uttered as to what had been agony like unto death to those she so dearly loved, and then the idea of soirées being held up as a consolation for ruined hopes!

"I think, dear Madame," she said, with forced calmness, "that the greatest kindness you can show Raymond Savoisy is to avoid calling public attention to him. Even all your influence cannot place him on an equality with your acquaintance."

"We shall see that," replied Madame de Beaupré. "You think me more foolish than I am. Au revoir, ma chère. I am going to dine with old Madame Moreau."

Christian never supposed for an instant that she had impressed Madame de Beaupré with the idea of an attachment between her and Raymond, and that the Vicomtesse had set her mind on getting them married.

Christian would have denied the charge of attachment, and refused the good offices with an equal indignation. Her theory was that people only fell in love through idleness, and *she* had never known times of idleness.

CHAPTER V.

The Vicomtesse and the General.

"I SHALL be out all this afternoon, Mademoiselle," said Madame de Beaupré next morning to Christian. "Write and tell M. Savoisy to come and see you. Berthe and the bonne can chaperone you."

This last recommendation almost offended the Englishwoman, but she subdued her anger, remembering she was in France, where duennas are requisite even for young single ladies of thirty and upwards. As Madame de Beaupré was leaving the room, she turned and said, laughingly —

"Don't tell him I thought more of my dog's life than of his, it wouldn't be true."

While Raymond and Christian were talking over old times, forgetting the weary present in the happier past, Madame de Beaupré was seated in the business-room of the commandant of the detachment of Raymond's regiment, stationed at Magny le Sec. The colonel was at the dépôt at St. Juvin, some half-dozen leagues distant.

"I have come to ask you a favour, Monsieur le Commandant," said the pretty little Vicomtesse, with one of her brightest smiles.

"Always at your service, Madame," returned the commandant — an elderly man with sparse grey hair and choleric grey eyes, in his button-hole the red rosette. A valiant, trustworthy officer, but a martinet — oh! a very martinet. One who, believing there could be no heaven unless there was a hell, brought the similitude to bear on the affairs of the garrison, and bestowed punishment more freely than reward.

"Perhaps you don't know that one of your soldiers is a gentleman born, the son of the best man in the world. It's dreadful to think of the poor fellow living amongst common men. And now, what I have come to beg you to do, is to get him made an officer as quickly as possible; will you?" here another bewitching smile.

An irate glance shot from the commandant's grey orbs.

"The Emperor himself couldn't do it," he said, with hot decision.

The tone and look banished all the colour from the little lady's cheeks; she had a feeling as if Monsieur de Beaupré had returned to life.

After the momentary panic, she plucked up a spirit and said, —

"But I know it can be done, and it shall be done. If you won't do it, I shall go to Paris to my cousin, M. d'Esbryat. He is a general. I danced once with a lieutenant who had been a sergeant."

The commandant laughed as an angry man does.

"A sergeant; that's another affair. I told you a private could not be made an officer."

"What's the mighty difference between a private and a sergeant; neither are officers?" said Madame de Beaupré, with a charming scorn.

"Permit me, Madame;" and the commandant sat down to his desk and wrote diligently for five minutes; then he handed to his visitor a half sheet of paper, on which were about twenty lines written in a delicate feminine handwriting. "This will explain to you the rules of promotion in the service."

"But I can't read all that," she said, pushing away the paper. "The truth is, you don't wish to do it. Good day, Monsieur."

"But my dear lady, you don't understand —"

"No, I can't be expected to understand military tactics; but I do understand that one ought to do a good-natured act when one can. My heart is set on getting this young man made an officer — it's for the sake of his mother and another person — it's very cruel of you!" and she turned away.

"What's the name of your protégé?" asked the commandant.

"Why should I tell you? perhaps you will be angry with him because I have disturbed you with your tiresome papers."

"Ah! Madame, you are cruel and unjust. I in-

quired, that I might see what could be done. If the young man is well conducted, he might be put on the list for promotion at the next general inspection, and get his corporal's stripes; that would be a step towards his gold epaulette."

"How long would it take after his being a corporal?"

"Let me see; he must first be a corporal, then corporal-major, then sergeant, then ——"

"Oh, stop! what I want is, that he should be made an officer directly."

"Impossible, as I had the honour to explain to you; the Emperor himself could not do it."

The Vicomtesse drew down her veil, walked out of the office, jumped into her blue coupé, without heeding the commandant's offered arm, and muttering, "We shall see, we shall see," drove away home.

Madame de Beaupré might have had a sight of Raymond Savoisy, for as her carriage drove into the front court he was coming out of the house; but she was so pre-occupied, she never noticed him or his bow, which the coachman returned.

"Mademoiselle, I am going to leave you in charge of Berthe and Angelo. I am going to Paris."

"May I ask if you will be long absent, Madame?"

"Not more than four or five days. I am going to Madame de Tessin."

Miss Power thought it an odd proceeding, for Madame de Tessin had only left the previous day.

It was not only Miss Power who was surprised at this sudden journey, the "150" were in great perplexity. They condescended, as they had never done before, to pay the governess a visit. They cross-examined her cleverly, but she could give no other explanation than that the Vicomtesse had gone to her cousin in Paris.

Madame de Tessin laughed heartily at what she called Madame de Beaupré's Quixotism. Any sort of enthusiasm is apt to excite ridicule: the common-place look down on your enthusiast from the calm regions of their intellectual opacity.

It was such a mere piece of romance, argued Madame de Tessin, it might be so easily misjudged; it would be so difficult to make anyone believe that such excessive interest could be excited for the friends of a *governess*.

Thérèse laughed one of her long trilling laughs — a laugh sweet as that of a happy child. She said, —

"Well, you are right, *ma cousine*; you have really hit the mark. Truth is always best, so I will confess to you that I want to help this young man because he saved my dog: he does deserve some reward for that, doesn't he?"

"Give him money."

"I would willingly; but the way to make him accept it?"

"Not accept it! I wonder what the world is coming to when such *petites gens* permit themselves airs of nobility?" said Madame la Comtesse de Tessin, with a shudder.

Before noon next day, Madame de Beaupré drove to the Faubourg St. Germain, to visit the Comte d'Esbryat, *Général en retraite*.

The moment you entered the Hôtel d'Esbryat you perceived that you had left modern times for ancient. Within its walls there remained the echo of bygone generations. Grey-haired servants who had been born on the paternal domains of the d'Esbryats and had spent their lives in their service, ushered you into salons replete with family records and relics.

The Comte himself also belonged to the old school; his very features were not those of the men of this century. Instead of hurry and pre-occupation, the habitual expression of his face was that of a gentle humourist. His were calm deep eyes, that guaranteed the words uttered by lips of incredible finesse. A small slight man, carrying himself with a stateliness that impressed you with the idea of height; you would never have anything to say of his manners, like all things in harmonious proportion, they failed to dazzle at first sight.

Thérèse, the volatile Thérèse, felt the influence of the atmosphere of d'Esbryat House, and involuntarily her manner took a tone in accordance with that of her

host. The family pictures by which she was surrounded also had an effect on her as if she had suddenly been transported into the noble circles in which they had played their part. She recalled the noisy and *tant soit peu* vulgar gaiety of her life at Magny le Sec, with a passing feeling of disgust.

The Comte made all the inquiries incumbent on him to make, paid his young relative sundry well-turned compliments on her fresh beauty; ventured on a delicate allusion to the unsuitability of widowhood to her age, and asked if she had come to settle in Paris, assuring her of his willingness to act the part of her guardian and father.

What had seemed to her the easiest thing to do at Magny le Sec, now greatly embarrassed the little Vicomtesse. All at once the motive of her visit seemed to her absurd, and truth to say, she began herself to wonder at her enthusiasm of the last couple of days.

She had already finished breakfast before she had courage to broach the subject of the soldier's promotion.

"I am going to make a confession to you, my cousin," she began, turning away to hide the flushing of her face. "I have undertaken to do something, and I have set my heart on succeeding, but unless you help me, I am sure I shall fail."

"An alarming exordium. What is it? a place at

court for yourself, *ma chère*, or a *bureau de tabac* for your waiting-woman?"

"No, no. I want to get a young soldier promoted."

"Ah!"

"Yes, I want to have him made an officer."

"Let us understand one another, dear lady: you wish some brave and excellent captain or major, some young hero, to get a step; that is it, is it not?"

"Not at all, my cousin. I am speaking only of a common soldier, and what I am come to beg you to do, is to have him made an officer, that's all."

"And pray why is the Vicomtesse de Beaupré interested in this common soldier?"

Hereupon Madame de Beaupré told, in a more concise and explicit way, Raymond Savois's story, not omitting the episode of his saving her dog Angelo.

At this the Comte's face clouded. "I cannot assist you for such a reason, *chère dame*; had this young man saved your child, I could understand and sympathize in your gratitude. Send the man a purse with twenty napoleons in it. If you are not in funds (pretty women seldom have a penny to spare), make me your banker."

"It is *not* because of Angelo, though I do think a man who saves a dog from drowning, shows even more goodness of heart than one who saves a child; he knows people will be more apt to laugh at him than

to praise him for his compassion to a poor animal. Even you, my cousin, whom I believed to be so superior to everyone else; see how you judge." Thérèse made no effort to hide that she was ready to cry with vexation.

M. d'Esbryat took a delicate pinch of snuff between his finger and thumb, and said, —

"The son of a Protestant minister; pray what is he like?"

"I am sure I don't know, I never saw him. I wish him to get on for the sake of my governess."

"Oh, ho! that's it, is it. You say he has been in Africa?"

"It very nearly killed his poor mother," said Thérèse, in a tone of indignation.

"I suppose many mothers in France have been in the same predicament," observed the Comte, calmly. "If this young man has been in any battle, he has probably got a medal. If you knew a little more about your protégé's history, it would be easier to gratify you. How would you have me interfere in his behalf without one good reason to give, except, indeed, that the pretty Vicomtesse de Beaupré wills that I should do so."

"Then you will do something?" and Thérèse's face was illuminated by pleasure into perfect beauty.

"I suppose I must," replied M. d'Esbryat, looking at her, and suppressing a sigh. Is it possible for the

most reasonable among us not to regret our vanished youth, and all that youth permits us to hope.

"You are the dearest of cousins," and Thérèse seized one of the Comte's thin white hands and kissed it. The poor gentleman was more mortified than pleased by the caress.

"I count for nothing more than an old woman with her," thought he. However he said kindly, "Don't be too sure of my obtaining what you wish; all I can promise is to try. Get me a distinct account of the young man's age, time of service, and the character his superiors give him."

"But if I have to do that, he will know that I am trying to help him, and that's what I don't wish."

"I cannot understand why you should make any mystery of what you are doing."

"It's a feeling I have," replied Thérèse. "Couldn't you write and ask his colonel, and no one need ever know I interfered."

"What's his regiment?"

"The 101st infantry."

M. d'Esbryat got up and fetched an Army List for the year.

"Colonel Casaubon — I know nothing of him."

"But that does not signify," persisted Thérèse, "General Comte d'Esbryat confers an honour on any one he addresses."

"Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut," laughed the old gentleman.

"And you will write, and this very day; this is Wednesday, you will have an answer on Friday. May I come again on Friday and hear the result?"

"Without doubt. Au revoir, my pretty cousin. Take care only to have good fancies; for, par dieu, you have in your little person the will of an elephant."

Three days after, Madame de Beaupré received a note from M. d'Esbryat. He told her he had had an answer from Colonel Casaubon. The information was highly satisfactory. Raymond Savoisy was already a serjeant, and his name down on the second class of those recommended for promotion at the approaching general inspection. It appeared the young man had received the cross of the legion of honour for an act of great bravery in saving a comrade's life. M. d'Esbryat concluded by saying that to make the matter sure, Raymond Savoisy must be made serjeant-major immediately, and his name transferred from the second to the first class. He therefore enclosed a note for Monsieur de Cuzensac, the general of inspection for the departement of which Magny le Sec is a *chef lieu*. It would be worth while to interest M. de Cuzensac, and a lady such as Madame de Beaupré would do this more effectually than a greybeard like her humble and devoted servant and friend Raoul d'Esbryat.

There were two lines of postscript — “Madame de Beaupré would do well to have a chaperone with her on her visit to M. de Cuzensac.”

Madame de Beaupré paid no attention to this last recommendation. She rung for her maid, and after using every means to be as pretty as possible, set off alone to seek an interview with the hero represented as so redoubtable.

Arrived at the address on Monsieur d'Esbryat's letter, she sent it in with one of her own cards. In less than five minutes a valet, with the air of a minister of state, came to conduct her into the General's presence.

A dapper little old man, dressed to perfection, came running up to her as if about to embrace her.

“Delighted to accede to all Madame's wishes, she had only to lay her commands on him, she should be obeyed.”

While saying this, M. de Cuzensac had taken both her hands in his. She began her story, but the General's eyes were so impertinent, that in spite of her pride her voice shook.

“Lucky young dog,” exclaimed M. de Cuzensac, as she paused for breath. “I wish I could change places with him.”

“I should not have troubled you,” continued Thérèse, struggling to assume a grand austere manner;

"but that this person being a gentleman, I cannot show my gratitude to him as I could if he were a peasant."

"And so he saved your dear little dog! A fine strapping fellow, I daresay," said M. de Cuzensac. "I approve of you greatly. Lord, all you girls adore fine young men. I remember some one very like you, who was uncommonly kind to me once. I fancy I see her before me. What will you give me if I do what you ask? You mustn't keep all your gratitude for this serjeant what's his name; otherwise I shall detest, abhor and abominate him." With what a tigerish snarl the dapper General uttered these words.

"I shall be very grateful to you all my life," said Madame de Beaupré, not knowing what else to say.

"All your life," mimicking her tone, "and where shall I be when you have cut your wisdom teeth, you pretty poppet;" and he put his arm round her waist, and tried to kiss her. She disengaged herself quickly.

"I shall send your protégé to the devil," he said, laughing.

"No you will not," she retorted, gaining courage as soon as attacked. "Suppose I were your sister" (feminine tact avoided the word daughter), "would you wish me to act otherwise?"

"H'm — h-m."

She took hold of his two hands. "It's so nice to be kind and to do good. You will be good and kind?"

The lovely face all aglow with mingled anxiety and modesty, *was* very fascinating.

"You little witch," he said. "Give me a kiss, and I promise to be what you call good and kind."

"You promise on your honour?" she asked.

"I promise."

She held up her cheek.

"Go away with you while it is time." She was obeying with alacrity when he ran after her.

"When I come to Magny le Sec, I shall claim another payment in the same coin, or I'll put that confounded fellow's name last on the list."

"Value for value," she answered, as she jumped into the carriage. The moment she had driven off, how she did rub her face — almost took the skin off her cheeks.

"I wonder," she soliloquized, "if this is what all women have to go through, who go begging for their brothers' and husbands' promotion. And to think I have done it for a stranger. I shan't be able to bear my own face till I believe all the skin of it is changed. I should like to know what Miss Power would have done had she been in my place."

At the thought of that demure Christian receiving a declaration from General de Cuzensac, Thérèse, though all alone, burst out into a ringing laugh.

CHAPTER VI.

The Vicomtesse and the Subaltern.

A GRAND tournament of tongues took place on the occasion of the sudden flight of Madame de Beaupré to Paris, and of her as sudden return.

Nothing more easily excited than the imaginations of people dwelling in small towns such as Magny le Sec, where there is no opera, no picture-gallery, no lecture, no concert-rooms, no public orators, no poets, no painters. Having nothing better to talk about, they discuss their neighbours. They lie in wait for you at every corner; they watch and comment on the changes of your countenance, give their own interpretation to a doubtful word, and a meaning to a headache — a shake of the hand — a chance meeting at the railway station.

Never was there a greater display of ingenuity of conjecture, and of that second sight of evil, peculiar to provincials, than with regard to Madame de Beaupré's visit to Paris. Who was the happy originator of the report was never ascertained; but a story went the rounds, and was believed, that a young officer was in the case, and that some one in an hotel had recognized

her voice in an adjoining room, imploring and pleading.

Yes, this invention circulated freely, but in whispers. One acquaintance said to the other, "I tell it only to *you* — it's not a thing to talk about;" and then everybody smiled on Madame de Beaupré, as if they had not just before given her a *coup de langue*.

April was now at hand, bringing with it fair promises of flowers and fruits, and of the general inspection of the troops of the department.

M. de Cuzensac had arrived at Magny; and coincident with the review, Madame de Beaupré gave a great dinner, the first she had ventured on since the death of M. de Beaupré.

General de Cuzensac sat on her right hand, and the Colonel of the 101st on her left; and such were the General's attentions that everyone inquired if he had a wife? Yes, there was a Madame de Cuzensac — poor woman! What would the Magny public have said had they known that when the General gave Madame Thérèse one piece of news, she kept the promise he had exacted in Paris? She did so as she took him in her pretty blue *coupé* to the station.

It was about a fortnight later that Madame de Beaupré sent for Miss Power to the small salon opening into the garden.

"I have something pleasant to tell you, Mademoiselle," said the Vicomtesse, her face as radiant as

the bright blue of the sky on that April morning. "Read for yourself," and she put the *Moniteur* into the governess's hand, pointing to the paragraph which announced that Raymond Savoisy had been promoted to a sub-lieutenancy in the 101st.

"I am so glad, for your sake, that he is to remain in his old regiment."

"Thank you, madam, for your kind sympathy," returned the Englishwoman, primly. "I had a few lines from Raymond last evening, telling me of his promotion. It is one of the rare instances," went on Miss Power, "of merit making its own way. Raymond has no one but himself to thank for his success."

Madame de Beaupré remembered the kisses she had bestowed on General de Cuzensac, and from that time forth understood how rarely the things of this life are what they appear to be, of how rarely we judge correctly of what we have reasons for supposing we perfectly understand. She said, with unusual sobriety of manner, "I give you joy. I hope her son's advancement will be a consolation to Madame Savoisy."

"Ah! yes, it has been hard on her to know that her noble-minded clever Raymond was excluded the society of his equals for an act that entitled him to their respect."

"It was yourself, Mademoiselle, who prevented my inviting M. Savoisy. I daresay it was for the best;

but now I shall give a soirée on purpose for him, and I shall introduce him to all my set."

Christian coloured deeply; she wished, with all her heart, that Madame de Beaupré would forget Raymond's existence. Something in this pertinacity of memory, in one so volatile, impressed Miss Power with an undefinable dread, and yielding to this sensation, she answered, "Pardon my frankness, Madame; but I am sure it would be better not to invite Raymond."

"And why not, Mademoiselle?"

"Where there is neither equality of fortune nor position, intercourse cannot be agreeable."

"In France we have not such aristocratical prejudices," said Madame de Beaupré; "but perhaps you have some other reason?"

"None but the one I have given," said Christian, coldly.

"In that case, I shall send the invitation. I really should be glad of an opportunity of thanking M. Savoisy for what he did for Angelo."

Christian made no further reply; but she had determined to try and prevent Raymond's accepting the invitation.

There is a Protestant chapel at Magny le Sec, and every Sunday Christian and Raymond met at morning and evening service. The congregation were not behind their Catholic brethren in curiosity, and had already come at the knowledge of Miss Power being intimately

acquainted with young Savoisy's family. On this fact they built a certainty that Raymond and Christian would undoubtedly marry as soon as circumstances permitted.

Having thus decided, the wives of the members of the Presbytery — that is, Madame Bischoff, the shoemaker's lady, and Madame Jolly, of the china shop — took Miss Power under their protection, and enabled her, without offending French proprieties, to have an interview with Raymond once a week. Christian had seen fit, for reasons of her own, to decline his visits at Tremereus House. She had said so decidedly, "It would not do," that he had made no remonstrance.

Madame de Beaupré kept her word, in spite of the governess's expostulations. Ere Sublieutenant Savoisy's gold epaulette was a week old, he received a card for a *soirée dansante*.

"It's just the last society your father and mother would like you to frequent — frivolous and heartless," urged Christian, when she saw him on the Sunday after the invitation.

"It can't matter much my accepting once, and I confess I have a curiosity to see how I shall behave among ladies and gentlemen. I must begin to learn the ways of polite society now that I am restored to it. Don't you see, Christian?"

No, Christian did not see the necessity, but she did not say so. She had better have let things take

their course, given no advice; nothing makes us like to go anywhere so much as the being told we had better stay away.

Never had Madame de Beaupré been so difficult to please as to her hair and her dress as for that particular party. She had thought so much about this Raymond Savoisie for weeks past, that she had come to care as to the impression she should make on him. She overthrew all the elaborate fabric her maid had so arduously raised on her head. "She would have nothing in her hair."

"Madame, then, would look like a *demoiselle à marier*."

"Give me the diamond earrings and brooch. How do you think I look, Mademoiselle?" asked the Vicomtesse, as she and Miss Power stood waiting the arrival of the first guests.

"Your dress is very becoming, Madame."

"Making my looks depend on my dress! Ah, Mademoiselle, you will never spoil me by flattery."

"No, Madame."

"But it is very pleasant to be flattered. I like it, even though I know it is flattery."

"If you raise your eyes to the glass, Madame, you will not need that my rough tongue should compliment you."

Madame de Beaupré did involuntarily look at the reflection of herself in the great mirror in front of

them, and marking the contrast between herself and her governess, blushed, saying, —

“You take as much trouble to disfigure yourself as I do to set myself off to the best advantage. If you would only allow Justine to do your hair, you would be pretty. I am sure you would; you have a nice nose and eyes.”

“Why should I care, if people only like me for my appearance; I have no ambition for their liking. Here are some ladies, Madame.”

“Ah! my dear lady — *chère* Madame, how lovely you are this evening,” was said to Madame de Beaupré by every one of her lady guests in succession, their eyes glancing in every direction in quest of admiration for themselves. One of the marked “oppositions of race” between French and English, is the faculty Frenchwomen, with the smallest funds to go upon, have of looking pretty. An Englishwoman, aware of her want of personal attractions, resigns herself, wears her hair and her clothes anyhow, and makes herself “an object.” A Frenchwoman, with the most ineligible of noses and skins, fights nature, wins, turns herself out *très bien* or *charmante* — at the least *gentille*. It’s a precious gift they have.

The first scrape of the fiddlesticks of Joannot’s band (Joannot was the *Musard* of Magny le Sec,) had given the signal for the commencement of dancing, as the commandant of the 101st came in, accompanied by

another officer. Madame de Beaupré, whose eyes had kept a strict watch on the door, knew at once that the younger man was Raymond Savois. Up to that moment she had been doubtful whether Miss Power might not have persuaded him to neglect her invitation, and the doubt had piqued her into a wish for his presence. She did now what she had done for none other of her guests; she went forward two or three steps to meet the new arrivals.

There is always a peculiar interest in the first meeting of two persons who have heard much of one another; a great curiosity to discover whether the features and persons agree with the idea each has formed of the other's character.

Madame de Beaupré had pictured to herself Raymond with the exterior of the martyr Miss Power had called him. She expected him to be tall, slight, pale, with blue eyes and chestnut hair, a semi-diaphanous individual, such as the St. Stephen of the chapel of the Visitandines, where she had been brought up. Instead of which, the young man was the type of a southern: black-haired, black-eyed, eyes that had flames in them; with a complexion as brown as a nut, of middle height, strongly rather than elegantly made.

And to think how she had scolded the commandant, coaxed M. d'Esbryat, and bribed General de Cuzensac, for such an everyday sort of man. She put

up her lip as Berthe did when disappointed, and smiled as she saw this ex-hero of her romance seek Christian's side; at the thought of how women make gods out of any materials.

It was because she had expected something entirely different that Madame de Beaupré was disappointed in Raymond's appearance. If not critically handsome, he had one of those faces which are a letter of recommendation. Impossible to imagine that envy, malice, or uncharitableness could lurk behind those frank, open eyes. Ah! Madame de Beaupré, wait till you have seen the sous-lieutenant smile, and till you have heard him laugh. Only a man with a good honest genial nature could have such a pleasant cheery laugh.

The impression Madame de Beaupré made on Raymond was quite other from that he had produced on her. He had expected to find a pretty woman, such as one meets everyday: coquettish, well dressed, with the indefinable grace which belongs to Frenchwomen as a rule. Instead of this, he found himself examining a face, with pretty features certainly, but which attract by a something enigmatical, a something of a disagreement, or of a double character in the expression.

Most people saw nothing more in Madame de Beaupré than a pretty capricious woman, just as there

are people who can hear nothing but confusion in a symphony of Beethoven.

Raymond Savoisy, born with a richness of imagination which might have made him distinguished in the career of art, at once perceived the contradiction, the character of duality in the face of his hostess. The eyes, deep and liquid, had much of the seeking and curiosity you may remark in those of a young girl; the expression of the mouth was not youthful; it was that which a painter would give if delineating one who has experience of the eternal irony which accompanies all the things of this world, of the mismatching, of the gulf between appearance and reality. Christian, noticing Raymond's fixed gaze, said, —

“You think Madame de Beaupré very pretty?”

“Yes. A countenance full of contradictions.”

“In what way?”

“Well, not one of those faces which make you say at once that the person to whom it belongs is good or bad, gentle or violent, or clever or stupid. How old is she?”

“Twenty - four or twenty - five. But she looks younger.”

“I am not sure of that.”

As Raymond's eyes followed Madame de Beaupré's, so occasionally he found hers turned towards his. At last, drawn by natural magic, she came up to him. “Don't you dance, Monsieur Savoisy?”

"Madame, I have never learned."

A look of amusement came into her face as she said, "But Protestants *do* dance. I have seen English people waltz and polka a whole night."

"My father disapproved of dancing," answered Raymond, meeting her laughing eyes calmly. He had risen when she first addressed him. She now took his seat, clearly intending to continue the conversation.

"Why does Monsieur votre père disapprove? I consider dancing as a preventive of scandal. When people are whirling about they can't talk."

"True; but they can feel."

"What?" she exclaimed, in surprise.

He coloured slightly as he answered, "My father likened dancing to intoxication."

"Then intoxication is pleasanter than I thought; for waltzing, with a good partner and good music, is charming. Listen." The band had begun to play one of Jules Frankomme's waltzes. "Doesn't that make you long to dance? You know I owe you a good deal of gratitude. Suppose I were to offer to teach you to waltz as payment of my debt."

The tone of voice was that of a coaxing child; the eyes were full of archness as she smiled up to him. Christian could have beaten her.

Raymond smiled also, but he shook his head.

"Immovable, I see." Then in a half whisper to

Miss Power, she said, "I told you I did not like martyrs, and I don't."

Away went the defeated little Vicomtesse, her white draperies floating and swelling round her like a fleecy cloud. In another minute she was whirling round the room with the substitut of the Procureur Impérial. Every time she passed Christian and Raymond she smiled.

"Shall I be expected to call here?" asked Raymond, after a long silence.

"You must certainly leave a card."

"Shall I see you if I come?"

"I never go to the salon on her reception-days."

"But, I suppose, you might if you chose."

"Certainly. She begged me to do so."

"Then make use of the permission for my sake."

"Perhaps."

When Raymond was making his parting bow, Madame de Beaupré said, graciously, "I always receive on Wednesday evenings, and on Sundays after vespers."

CHAPTER VII.

Amor che a nullo Amato, Amar Perdona.

M. RAYMOND SAVOISY was Madame de Beaupré's earliest visitor on the Sunday after her soirée. He found her in the salon alone with Angelo. As for any ceremonious reception, the little dog rendered that impossible. It barked and whimpered, shrieked and gasped, twisting and untwisting his small body, so that there was no telling which was his head or his tail, in actual convulsions of joy at the sight of his preserver.

Madame de Beaupré and Savoisy both stooped at the same moment to lift up the little creature. "I give him up to you," said the lady, withdrawing her hands; and Angelo thereupon sprang into the sous-lieutenant's arms with a cry of joy, almost human.

"You won't refuse my thanks also," said Madame de Beaupré, as soon as she could make herself heard. "It was a heroic act — oh! yes, it was," she added, impetuously, seeing him smile. "How many of the men who come here would have run the risk, do you think, of even a wet coat, to save a poor little dog from drowning. If you won't let me teach you to dance, you must allow me to be grateful."

Madame de Beaupré's voice alone, when she pleased, made conquests. Even the Demoiselles de Tremereens succumbed to its liquid suave tones. It sometimes conjured the demon of severity out of them. Always clear and musical, it took, as she spoke to Raymond, certain inflections that went straight to his heart.

The gentle sex like strength of every kind, above all, the strength of will, capable of resisting and governing them. They are said, indeed, never truly to love a man of whom they are not a little afraid, and are equally proud to obey as to dominate strength. Madame de Beaupré instinctively felt that the young officer was capable of withstanding her, and her manner involuntarily assumed an unusual softness. At that moment her better self had the upper hand. The expression of irony about the mouth had disappeared — eyes and lips were in pretty agreement. Raymond Savois's character had triumphed. Believe it or not, character makes itself felt almost instantaneously. The truthful and frank make those brought into contact with them, for a time truthful and frank.

"I will send and let Miss Power know you are here," said Madame de Beaupré, when they had exhausted the subject of Angelo. "I wish to make Mademoiselle as comfortable as I can, and so I hope you will come very often to see us. She is making my little girl so good. You know I have a little girl, or rather a big girl of six."

Raymond did not seem the least surprised to hear Mademoiselle Berthe's age. He did not say, as Madame de Beaupré was accustomed to hear from all her male acquaintance, that this was a remarkable fact, considering who was the mother.

"I wonder if he takes me for older than I am," was what passed through Madame de Beaupré's mind.

When Christian appeared in obedience to the summons she had received, she found Raymond, with Angelo curled into a ball on his knee, seated near Madame de Beaupré, giving her an account of what he did in the day.

"Had the Vicomtesse asked this of him, or had he volunteered it?" was a question Christian put to herself. She had that susceptibility we most of us have, as to the friends we have introduced, and have greatly praised. She need have had no fear as to Raymond anywhere, even at court. Though his conversation did not sparkle with wit, every word he uttered had that charm of *naïveté* peculiar to the sincere and pure-hearted.

He made the mistakes, nevertheless, which persons with little habit of the world are apt to make. He would talk to Christian in spite of her efforts to prevent him, of news from Nismes, which was as intelligible to the lady of the house as would have been a discourse on military tactics.

Had the little Vicomtesse owned to her private sentiments after Raymond's departure, she would have

confessed to being disappointed. She really believed Monsieur Savois considered her quite an old woman, all because she had been married, and was Berthe's mamma. It could only be that, for if he used his eyes he might perceive she was younger — a great deal younger than Miss Power. She returned to her first supposition that they were lovers, and deeply regretted having put on her lovely mauve muslin for a blind man.

In all places, big and small, the majority are imitators. Madame Martaud had met the sous-lieutenant at Madame de Beaupré's soirée — so had Madame Blanchard and others. He was, therefore, asked to their parties also. Besides, strange versions of his story got about, and shortly he was invested with the honours of a hero of romance. Many pairs of bright eyes welcomed him kindly — a score, at least, of red lips smiled on him. It pleased and interested all these women to see how honestly he took their coquettish advances for kindness. *Il est si bon enfant, cœur d'or, bon comme un ange* was how they spoke of him, and forthwith tried their utmost to change him into an imp of vanity and selfishness.

He and Madame de Beaupré met constantly, but on many occasions they did not exchange a word. She would have had a right to suppose she was the one beauty of the society least appreciated by the young officer so suddenly become the fashion in Magny le

Sec. He paid her none of the attentions which men of all ages so gladly pay to pretty women. He went even further than neglect. If accident or *her* will took her to the part of a salon where he was, five minutes afterwards he had changed his place. He had ceased to appear on her reception days, and had missed so many of her evenings that she could not but understand that he avoided her wilfully.

She asked herself "Why?"

On her side she never joined in the praises so lavished on the young officer; if forced to speak of him, she did so of a person indifferent to her.

It was at this period that Justine constantly complained in the servants' hall that Madame's temper had become as uncertain as a weathercock. And oh! *Dieu de Dieu!* she was so difficult about her hair and her dress. One day she would be like a nun, and the next Dame! it was *assomant*.

Mademoiselle Justine did not understand it, not she, but often Madame came home from parties white as a ghost, when she had gone away bright as summer. She would sit, too, with her hands on her lap, and never seem to know that she was having her hair brushed — never say a word about the other ladies as she used to do. She was quite lost in her mind like.

Others besides Justine had reason to complain of Madame de Beaupré's capricious moods. At times even affectionate to Christian, at others she would ad-

dress her in a mocking staccato voice, that would have tried the temper of an angel.

As for Raymond, when they met, and strange to say, they did so constantly, she turned her back on him, vouchsafing him neither word nor glance. Their oddly commenced acquaintance, to all appearance, was drawing to an end.

Raymond had conscientiously, as he believed, taken every means to arrive at such a conclusion. Love does not wait on judgment, it prefers to defy it. Love comes like the wind, we know not from whence; alas! it goes we know not where. With some it grows as slowly as an acorn into an oak — with others it arrives at as sudden a maturity as poor Jack's bean.

Raymond had been struck, laid low as by a thunderbolt. The very first sight of Madame de Beaupré had been sufficient. Everything about her — hair, eyes, mouth, voice, smile, her way of sitting, standing, moving, all had a fascination for him.

When he made the discovery that he thought of her night and day, in fact thought of nothing but her, it was to acknowledge that she was one of the very last women he ought to love, because one of the very last he could or should marry. Religion, fortune, station, were three insurmountable barriers between them. He had a vivid recollection of his father's and mother's disapprobation of mixed marriages. He did what he could, which is more than most of us do. He

controlled his actions, but his heart made such an obstinate resistance, he had at last to come to a compromise with it; and hence, though he avoided Tremereus House, he went everywhere else where there was a chance of seeing his idol. *To see her*, was the one favourable clause he had granted to the enemy within the citadel. The joy of the presence of the one loved, who has not felt it! And the yearnings, the impatiences, the mortal ennui, the heart-sicknesses, that follow! It does not help us much, rather it does not help us at all, to be assured that others have endured the same suffering and survived. Besides, suffering cannot be measured, it depends on the nature of the individual — an earthquake to one is merely a little shaking to another. The heart is deceitful, always has been so, and probably always will be so. Raymond's had as little guile as is compatible with human nature, still it played the hypocrite when it comforted him by assurances that no harm had been done to any one but himself. There is a strange reciprocity of feeling between all living creatures. Do two people who love one another ever remain ignorant of each other's sentiments, let them take ever such sincere precautions to keep their secret?

Close to Magny le Sec are the Massonge woods, covering the sides of two rounded hills, divided by a

green valley so narrow it might more justly be called a ravine. Zig-zag paths traverse the wood in every direction, making the ascent or descent tolerably easy. The pride of the proprietor, who is no other than our little Vicomtesse, is a broad, smooth walk, such as you see in Royal gardens. This alley is bordered by tall limes, making a pleasant chequered shade in the hottest July days; the flowers perfuming, not oppressing the air. Mid-way is a majestic beech, its long sweeping branches forming an impervious roof to the seat encircling its noble trunk.

To the right of the road, as you come from the town, is a so-called *châlet*. It is more of a shed — very picturesque, and the pleasantest of dining-rooms on a summer day — but not a *châlet*. This rustic banqueting-room and the great beech had seen many of the frolics and follies of Madame de Beaupré and her *bande des folles*. This year, however, she had given no invitations “to the wood.”

Nothing that high and low in Magny like so well as going “to the wood.” Every fine day of the three hot months of the year, you will see groups of any number, varying from two or three to twenty and thirty, carrying provisions, going to one or other of the public woods which girdle Magny le Sec. The great folks drive to their own gardens or woods, as it may be, but the amusements of work-people or their employers are very similar. Steady matrons work and

gossip; young girls and young men play at "cat and mouse," or "blind man's buff," or hunt for nuts. Young ladies, *comme il faut*, romp without young gentlemen. *Les jeunes femmes*, such as Madame la Vicomtesse de Beaupré and her intimates, are given to copying the pastimes of their inferiors. *Honi soit qui mal y pense* is their device.

No more lovely demesne near Magny than that of Massonge; but it had one crying disadvantage — the public had a right of way through the valley, rendering the chalet and the beech walk anything but private. All the wedding-parties pic-nicked in the Massonge woods; very often when the Vicomtesse drove up, she found a riotous set of individuals at table. She had, therefore, come to the resolution of building another chalet higher up, and out of sight of the high road.

One fine morning, in early August, just when trees and vineyards begin to clothe themselves in soft purple tints, Madame de Beaupré gave M. Coigne, the architect, a rendezvous at Massonge.

She took Christian, Berthe, and Justine in the carriage with her. The chef and a basket of comestibles was on the box with the coachman. M. Coigne would expect at least a breakfast *à la fourchette*. As they were driving over the old bridge by which you leave Magny le Sec, Madame de Beaupré was struck by the effect of the sun on the river. She said —

"I never thought there was any beauty in Magny before. What a pity the sun does not always shine!"

"The contrast of cloudy skies makes us appreciate fine days more," observed Miss Power, rather sententiously.

"That's a discovery of the English to reconcile themselves to their abominable climate," said Madame de Beaupré, in her most staccato tone, and effectually closed the conversation. She was cross, and she knew she was cross. She could have said but for shame what Berthe often did, "I want to be good, but I can't."

The whole of the drive the Vicomtesse kept looking up and down the road so anxiously that Miss Power imagined some one was expected. Not a soul, however, was to be seen till they reached the chalet, where they found the old architect waiting for them.

"We had better go on our search, Madame la Vicomtesse, before the sun gets too powerful," he said.

"It's all the same to me," she answered, and in a tone that made M. Coigne glance inquiringly at her face.

Justine and Berthe were desired to go to the beech-tree, the chef to prepare the midday, and then Madame de Beaupré announced that she was ready to follow M. Coigne's lead.

It is not given to every one to enjoy Nature, to

have their vexation or their *ennui* charmed out of them by watching the alternations of light and shade on leaves, by the dancing shadows of waving branches, or by glimpses of the blue of the firmament caught through the leafy top of some giant tree. Madame de Beaupré saw nothing of sky or shadow; from time to time she broke forth into little pettish exclamations at the heat, at the steepness of the road, at some vixenish little round pebble which nearly made her fall.

"Suppose we give it up for to-day?" said M. Coigne, soothingly; "it is very hot, very steep; I never knew more oppressive weather."

But no, the Vicomtesse would go on.

Half-way up one of the hills, a vista has been cut, to allow of a view of Magny. As our trio came in sight of the convenient seat placed there, they perceived it was occupied.

"Very tiresome," muttered Madame de Beaupré, who was a little shortsighted. The next moment she turned away her face, lest her companions should see the treacherous flush which so suddenly suffused it.

"Ah! it is M. Savoisy, almost my colleague," exclaimed M. Coigne. "A happy chance, Madame; my young friend will give us his advice."

Raymond took off his hat, and, according to a French custom, did not replace it after his preliminary bow. He looked strikingly handsome, as he stood, bareheaded, in the blaze of light before the advancing

party. There was something of a kingly grace in the courtesy of his attitude. Madame de Beaupré tried to return his salutation with frigid propriety, but a soft happy smile stole over her face.

Christian was so busy watching the countenances of the lady and gentleman, she scarcely returned Raymond's greeting. He had been sketching; his book had fallen on the ground. Old M. Coigne picked it up, and, showing the drawing to the Vicomtesse, exclaimed, "Here's the man to make you a design for your chalet."

"I did not know you drew, M. Savoisy," said Madame de Beaupré, and her voice had resumed its silver tones; her features had relaxed; she was a different creature from what she had been five minutes before. "Oh! pray, put on your hat, M. Savoisy; I am afraid we have disturbed you. It won't matter if we rest here a little; I mean it won't spoil your drawing."

Raymond stammered some words in reply; he was so startled by the unexpectedness of the interview, so subdued by the smile and voice of the little lady, that he scarcely knew if he were standing on his feet or head. In such a case, a person who sees no further than his nose is a blessing. Monsieur Coigne seized the supremacy of the conversation, assured Madame de Beaupré that his clever young friend was honoured and made happy by her presence and approbation, in

a paternal manner bid Raymond sit on the bank or the grass, as there was no room for him on the bench. Thanks to M. Coigne, everybody began to feel more at ease; he asked—

"Would this not be exactly the site for the chalet?"

"Quite," replied Madame de Beaupré, she was surprised she had never before thought of it.

"A little higher up," Raymond said, "there were some metres of flat ground, with a more extended view, and a profusion of wild flowers, that made a lovely natural garden."

"But Madame dislikes going up hill," said M. Coigne.

"I think I had better see the spot M. Savoisy speaks of before deciding," observed Madame de Beaupré. All this time she had kept Raymond's album on her knee. "May I look at the other sketches, M. Savoisy," and her words were spoken music.

"Ah!" thought Christian, "how can men ever judge women. Who would imagine this was the Vicomtesse of an hour ago."

It was not hypocrisy, it was not art, it was joy that lent such a charm to Madame de Beaupré's tones. She turned over the leaves of the drawing-book, asking for information about each separate sketch, which obliged him to draw near her. The same female head

had appeared on different pages; but Madame de Beaupré asked no questions about the original.

"A market girl," volunteered Raymond, "whom I used to see under my window all the while we were stationed at ——; I heard that her mother was a Circassian."

M. Coigne took out his watch several times during the never-ending examination of the sketch-book. M. Coigne was not a good listener; he avowed it; "it tired him far more to listen than to speak."

At last he declared he was obliged to be in Magny by a certain hour.

"Oh! dear; and the breakfast, I had forgotten all about it," exclaimed Madame de Beaupré truthfully, "will you show us the way to the place you spoke of, M. Savoisy?"

This time no one heard a word of complaint from the Vicomtesse's lips. She stepped along as if she were walking on air, a murmur as of a song was on her lips.

She gave a cry of delight when they reached the bit of table land Raymond had discovered, — "Here, oh! yes here she would have the chalet."

M. Coigne took a pinch of snuff, and demurred — "It was very high, very much exposed to sun and wind."

"Not more so than many houses in Switzerland," said Raymond.

"Certainly not," affirmed Madame de Beaupré, "and it could be built quite in the Swiss style, with overhanging eaves and an outside gallery, and stones on the roof."

"And water? it will have always to be brought up," objected M. Coigne.

"We can have a donkey to do that. Oh, yes, yes, M. Coigne, here must and shall be the new châlet, please to make the plan, but no more objections."

"Suppose Madame la Vicomtesse were to ask M. Savoisy to give her a design."

"Would you be so very kind, M. Savoisy?" she said, with a bewitching face.

"I am always at your orders, Madame."

"Not true," she said; but so low that the words only reached his ears.

A cloud came over his face, and he went and joined Christian who was gathering a bouquet of wild flowers.

M. Coigne, who was *au fait* of all the gossip that made the round of the town, ventured to allude to the report current of an intended marriage between those he designed by a motion of his head.

"I know nothing of Mademoiselle's private affairs," was the answer in a haughty voice.

Things are rarely what they seem; but if ever man was justified in supposing two people were betrothed,

it was M. Coigne, as he watched Raymond helping Christian to gather flowers.

Christian had been meditating on what every glance of Raymond's eye, every gesture, every tone of his voice revealed. She was less sure of the sincerity of Madame de Beaupré's feelings, but if they were sincere.... Folly that must end in misery, thought the English-woman.

"Take my advice, Raymond," she said, as he came to her side, "buy a pair of spectacles, or else you will stumble into some pitfall." Of course Christian believed herself quite dispassionate. We always do, just when our words are dictated by some secret irritation of feeling.

"I bought the spectacles you recommend some time ago," was his answer, and then they both lapsed into silence, she wishing with all her heart she had left her advice unspoken.

"Au revoir," shouted M. Coigne, and then they perceived that Madame de Beaupré had turned to go down the hill. In fact, she went so fast that M. Coigne, who was bulky, could not keep up with her. "Run after Madame, my young friend," he said to Raymond; "it is not right she should be alone. Trust Mademoiselle to me."

"Will you do me the honour to take my arm, Madame?" said Raymond, when he came up with the Vicomtesse.

"Thank you," which means in French, "No."

The little round pebbles assumed once more the defensive, and made the Vicomtesse stumble. When she had done so three or four times, Raymond said again —

"Do me the honour to take my arm — pray do."

A moment's hesitation, just long enough to peep into his face through her long eyelashes, and then she put her hand within his arm. He let it lie lightly until there was another stumble; then his hold tightened, the small hand was pressed close, closer to his side. She saw, as women see, without looking, the emotion in his face. She wished to say something, but there was a spell on her tongue. Anger and love mingled in his voice as he burst out —

"You were cruel and unjust in doubting my words just now. I am at your orders, to do anything you wish; a man is not to blame for the obstacles Providence puts in his way."

"I was in joke," she said quite timidly. "Forgive me," and the little hand pushed itself along his arm, till it slipped into his great strong palm.

He grasped it and held it until they came in sight of the chalet, and Berthe, and the chef.

"You will come and breakfast with us?" she asked.

"Not to-day, thank you." He lifted his hat, and was out of sight the next minute.

CHAPTER VIII.

Alarms.

NEVER had Madame de Beaupré been so perplexed as after that ten minutes' *tête-à-tête* walk with Raymond. Hitherto she had been frankly pleased or vexed; in short, had always understood her feelings. Now, they were disagreeably complex. She could not tell whether she was happy or sorry; both perhaps. Moments of a new joy are succeeded by a depression as novel. She was a prey to that discomfort which attacks us, when we have acted on some impulse, and are not sure that we are prepared to accept the consequences. She was full of that vague uneasiness which women feel who have never loved.

Memory, too, was busy with painful recollections, recalling the miserable story of one of her early friends, whose love had been used as a stepping stone to fortune, and who, once the prize gained, had been thrown aside with as much indifference as a sucked orange. She remembered the heart-rending consequences, the anguish borne in silence until reason fled, while the man, successful and respected, preached morality and devotion to the Church from the tribune of the *Chambre des Deputies*.

Madame de Beaupré, so remembering, relapsed into that dryness of soul which had been habitual to her during Monsieur de Beaupré's lifetime.

And Raymond — he was in his lodging, seated before an open bureau. That bureau was a small museum of relics. Dear reader, do not laugh. In the right-hand pigeon-hole was a bow of faded ribbon, it had fallen from Madame de Beaupré's dress, all her notes of invitation — such a droll scrambling hand she wrote; there were — (I beg indulgence for the truth,) — there were some crumbs of cake, which the beloved hand had let drop. Love is very child-like: it gives, nay, it restores to those who may have lost it, simplicity of heart. The roughest hind, under the influence of a true passion, will speak words that shall bring tears more surely to your eyes, than all the art of a poet.

Raymond loved Madame de Beaupré with all his being, loved her without hope, knowing that to-morrow, as to-day, there was no chance of their lives mingling in an union blessed by God and man. There are sufferings which are dear to us. There is a joy in resistance to our passions, in self-mastery, in placing our happiness higher than in self-gratification. Let no one doubt that there is a joy in loving without seeking love's recompense. Perhaps there is no earthly joy which equals the serving one we love without hire.

We can none of us so isolate ourselves in this world that others shall not interfere with the rules we have laid down for our lives. Raymond had imagined he might love, if hopelessly, at least without disturbance.

But Christian Power carried on a regular correspondence with the Pasteur Savoisy and his wife—not a conventional correspondence, but one that had all the fulness of a journal. Now, do what one will, letters always imbibe and reveal much of the real state of our opinions and feelings at the moment of their being penned. Being sorrowful or displeased, elate or depressed, strive to write a letter that shall not betray the dominant condition of your mind or heart, and in spite of your best endeavours, you will fail. Christian had had no settled intention of alarming Madame Savoisy, and yet Madame Savoisy was made uneasy.

“Christian disapproves of Raymond’s intimacy in Madame de Beaupré’s house,” said the pasteur’s wife.

“I could trust Raymond anywhere; the last seven years have given us proof of his steadiness,” was the answer.

“If he were among Protestants, I should have no fears; but these Catholic women! they have no notion how to take care of themselves; they are always trusting to their confessors.”

“I don’t quite follow your reasoning, my dear,”

said the pasteur. "Is Christian accusing any Catholic woman of turning Raymond's head?"

"Not in downright words, but I can *feel* that she is alarmed, and we know that that Vicomtesse of hers is an arrant coquette, as they all are."

"As all who, my dear?"

"You understand me very well; it would break my heart if Raymond were to get entangled in any disgraceful flirtation."

"I should be grieved beyond measure if he should become seriously attached to a Catholic; as for entanglements and coquettes, that is out of the question with Raymond."

A sublime thing to hear one individual thus become surety for another's rectitude.

But a woman's intuition often puts a man's logic to shame. She jumps with marvellous precision to the right conclusion without any attention to preliminary steps. From the moment of reading Christian Power's last letter, Madame Savoisy knew that her son was in danger, and that the danger was Madame de Beaupré. Madame Savoisy was not a woman to fold her hands when there was something to do. She set to work at once with all the energy of a Protestant and a mother to find a means of parrying the peril. She wrote to a Protestant friend in Paris, married to the head partner of a great stocking-weaving concern, to ask if

she had any acquaintances at Magny le Sec, which as we know drives a thriving trade in stockings. The stocking-weaver's lady knew of a Protestant family who had just gone to settle at Magny, on account of their eldest daughter having lately married a Protestant, appointed manager to one of the subsidiary establishments of the firm of the writer's husband. To be brief, Madame Savoisie asked her friend to obtain information for her, whether or not gossip connected Raymond's name with that of any lady of Magny, and begged also that letters of introduction might be sent to Raymond for Monsieur Poplus and his son-in-law, Monsieur Gelinotte.

This accomplished, she wrote to her son expressing her earnest desire that he would cultivate the acquaintance of these two families. This advice, she added, was dictated by a conviction that agreeable and friendly intercourse depended on equality of fortune and position, and, above all, on agreement of opinion on the most important of all subjects. There were, she knew, some rare exceptions to this rule, but it was universally allowed that those who stepped out of their own sphere had to suffer for it.

Raymond understood very well at what his mother was sending her arrows; certainly he should obey her and improve the acquaintance of Monsieur Poplus and his son-in-law. But there his obedience would stop —

the affections of his heart were his own — no slave but might cherish a love for a queen.

It was in this disposition of mind that he prepared for his introductory visit to Monsieur Poplus.

CHAPTER IX.

Projects of Marriage.

THE Popluses were the superlative of common-place people, exactly those whom the world, for reasons of its own, designate as "good." Wherever they went the adjective "good" was prefixed to their singular name. *Ah, ces bons Poplus.* It cannot fail but that in course of time the prefix will become incorporated with the name proper, and France will possess the Bon Poplus, or even perhaps the Bons de Poplus.

Roi ni prince je suis,
Comte ne daigne
Bon de Poplus je Suis.

Monsieur Poplus was a short, thick-set man, of one or two years above sixty. He wore his grey hair brushed up to a point in the centre of his head. He had round eyes, bushy greyish eyebrows, a stumpy nose, a button-hole mouth. His moustache, waxed to a fine point, was still black. He took occasion to tell all new acquaintances that he owed this to the greater youth of his moustache, "twenty years younger, you know, than my hair," and the remark invested Monsieur Poplus with a title to wit, for he took infinite

care not to explain that he had found the jest ready-made in one of his daughter's school-books.

In fact it was word for word the answer made by a ferryman to Henry the Fourth of France.

By-the-by why should a white feather have become the synonym of poltroonery. Was it not a white plume which that gallant French Harry carried into the thickest of the fight, that he might be known to friends and enemies?

To return to Monsieur Poplus.

Monsieur Poplus paid visits and taxes with great exactitude. He went twice regularly every Sunday to church, and each time put a sou into the bag which receives the contributions of the congregation for the poor, the widow, and the orphan. As his wife and his son-in-law, and his married and unmarried daughters did as much, Monsieur Poplus considered that he and they had done their part towards clothing and feeding the hungry and naked. Not only were they regular church-goers, but they went *en famille* — Madame Poplus on her husband's arm, Mademoiselle Nathalie tripping by their side, Monsieur and Madame Gelinotte and their two boys behind. Monsieur Poplus insisted on this hebdomadal procession; it looked respectable, *la famille* was a bulwark against republicanism and socialism — Monsieur Poplus was a fierce imperialist. Talk to him, indeed, of self-government and parliaments. What his common sense told him was the best for the

nation, for all nations, was a strong government, and there was no having a strong government where you had to argue and debate every question. No, no, despotism for him — liberty was license — the Emperor had the best head in the world; it was his business to keep the French and Europe in order.

It is a comfort to the weak and vacillating to feel themselves commanded, and in spite of his strong voice and bow-wow manner, Monsieur Poplus was without any back-bone in his mind.

Wherever and whenever it had been possible, in and out of season, Monsieur Poplus had always cried *Vive l'Empereur*, and his tenacity, the obstinacy peculiar to mediocrity, had obtained its end. What had he ever done, except continually cry aloud, to obtain not only the red ribbon, but the rosette of the Legion of Honour?

It had been the same with Poplus in all things; he had never seen anything in the world save his own interest — he had pursued that one end, and he had succeeded. Not once during his whole life had he known one of those enthusiasms for a cause or a person which leads a man to forget himself.

Everything about the Poplus pleased the crowd; they possessed the one only superiority before which the world willingly bends the knee — money.

Madame Poplus was the complement of her husband. If he had a strong martial way of speaking,

she had a plaintive one; if he lorded it over the unsuccessful or the unfortunate, she had ready tears for them; if he was particular about his eating, she was a capital cook; if he was a partisan of despotism, she kept him in excellent order. It was a high comedy to hear him explaining to his own advantage how he was managed. "If I am attacked in face, I never yield," quoth he, "but I may be coaxed or tricked (I like feminine wiles) into anything." Such was this "*bon Populus*."

Madame Gelinotte, the eldest daughter, was like most French women of her class, a first-rate housekeeper, alert, bustling, keeping a shrewd eye on her husband's affairs, actively superintending the education of her sons; that is, sending them to the Lycée, and bravely scolding them when the bulletin of their lessons and conduct was not satisfactory.

It is the fashion of French authors to represent the wives of their nation as coquettes, or as easily induced to forget their matrimonial oath. As romancers and poets they have a right to paint exceptional characters; but the realists are bound in honour to say that in the *bourgeoisie* you find, as a rule, respectably conducted wives, and the most devoted of mothers.

Quite so much cannot be said for the husbands, but there is no necessity to put aside the screen of *convenances* with which they satisfy themselves, their wives, and society.

This was how the eldest daughter of the Poplus's came to be Madame Gelinotte. It is a pretty fair example of the way our neighbours conduct these matters.

When Madame Poplus proposed M. Gelinotte as a suitable husband, the young girl had answered, "It is for you and my father to decide. I leave my fate in your hands."

"But my daughter, is there any repugnance on your side? You have seen the young man? Does his appearance please you?"

"I have never seen him, mamma."

"Yes, my cherished, you met him the other day at Madame Chavelle's soirée."

"I did not remark him, mamma."

It is a further fact that Madame Gelinotte, who was married the day fortnight after the proposal, when asked by one of her companions if she loved M. Gelinotte, answered, "Yes."

Very sensible and experienced people among the French assure you that they consider this system of marriage the only one possible for their nation.

Mademoiselle Nathalie was not quite such a well-regulated young person as her sister had been. She was a pretty girl of twenty-one at the moment of her introduction to Raymond Savois; as round as a quail, and as full of chatter as a swallow.

There was something redolent of revolt in Made-

moiselle Nathalie. Madame Gelinotte had been brought up while M. Poplus was building up his fortune; Nathalie, ten years younger, when the prosperity of her family was assured. Nathalie had had music and drawing masters. Nathalie had once been to Dieppe during the season. Nathalie had eyes and ears, and through these mediums Nathalie had imbibed ideas that her sister could not have understood.

The Poplus's house was in the Faubourg Marbœuf. The Faubourg might have been better designated as a village. It had its peculiar habits and interests, and these last were a constant source of dispute with the town proper.

Magny le Sec turned up its nose at Marbœuf, and Marbœuf decried the morals of Magny.

The Faubourg was the refuge of the *petite noblesse*, who had small government offices, or were employed at the Prefecture, or in the other administrations — places giving from fifteen hundred to two thousand four hundred francs a year. Cheapness of house-rent was, of course, a boon to these officials, and rents in Marbœuf were one-half what they were in the town. There was quite a cluster of "comtes," "barons" and "de's" in the Faubourg, and it was in the centre of this galaxy of titles that M. Poplus pitched his tent.

He had found a large imposing mansion at a price that would only have procured him a small house in Magny. He told everyone that the better air of the

locality had decided his choice; for his own part he should have preferred being nearer his club, but he had thought of the little Gelinottes — good air was so necessary for children. Ah! *ce bon* M. Poplus!

But Madame Gelinotte fretted over the shoes her boys wore out in their long walks to and from the Lycée.

Among the noble young ladies of the Faubourg, Nathalie's nascent ideas developed into aspirations.

"I don't approve of Nathalie's constantly running in and out of the neighbours' houses. She knows more than she ought. Fancy, my dear, she told me the other day we did not do her justice — that we ought to entertain more — to invite Madame de Beaupré and her set, and to go to the prefecture soirées. I wish to heavens we could get her married, but how is it to be done; there are no Protestants here." This was what Madame Poplus said to her daughter, Gelinotte, the morning before Raymond's first visit.

"M. Gelinotte and I wish she were married also," replied Madame Gelinotte; "but wishing is of no use. What do you say to Gelinotte's inquiring at Mulhouse?"

"So far off," returned the mother. "If this young M. Savoisy were a lieutenant, he might answer. His family is very respectable."

"Poor, very poor. And Nathalie would not be the best of managers."

"No. But he is sure to rise, and by-and-by he might get a place in the taxes."

"Oh! mother, don't think of it. Nothing makes such bad marriages as want of money."

"Ah! my dear, but a girl to marry is like a fire in the house."

Probably Madame Poplus had imparted her ideas on this subject to Monsieur Poplus, for he received Raymond with explosive cordiality, called Madame Poplus from the kitchen, and sent to fetch Nathalie from Monsieur le Comte de Remy's, taking care that the sous-lieutenant should understand that Nathalie's great friend was Mademoiselle Marguerite de Remy.

Madame Poplus's eyes roved curiously over the young man whilst she asked plaintively after Madame Savoisy's health. There was certainly the making of a son-in-law in this young man. Preposterous as Nathalie had grown about fashion, there was nothing about M. Raymond Savoisy's appearance to displease any girl.

Nathalie came in as red as a peony, and to hide a certain embarrassment looked cross.

"Ah! By-the-by," said Monsieur Poplus, "my brother-in-law, he lives in La Bresse, has sent me a capon; can't get even a decent fowl here: you have found that out, haven't you? Well, come and dine with me to-morrow, and you shall taste one; you shall have a bottle of good wine, and this little girl," pinch-

ing his daughter's ear, "shall give you a song into the bargain. She is not a Patti, you know, but—. Well, you shall judge for yourself. 'Patita, Patati,'" and M. Poplus growled forth a bar from the "Dragon de Villars."

Raymond bowed, and accepted the invitation. Monsieur Poplus, to show his satisfaction, forthwith put his daughter's pincushion on her chignon.

"You find it rather dull here, M. Savoisy?" said, or asked, Madame Poplus.

"Not he. A young man like him finds plenty of amusement wherever he goes," and the old hypocrite winked significantly to Raymond.

"While we were at Bordeaux, once, when papa was away for a month, mamma and I had forty-seven invitations, and twenty were for dinner," said Mademoiselle Nathalie, and all the circles that made up her face distended with a smile.

What could Raymond find to answer but an exclamation of astonishment.

"And here," went on Mademoiselle Nathalie, "we have not had, in six months, one invitation to dinner. The people in Marbœuf don't entertain, and living here, we are not asked in the town. I quite hate the place." Her little mouth, the very facsimile of her father's, buttoned itself up so drolly, that Raymond laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" she went on. "Gentlemen never seem to think girls can be unhappy."

"I should regret very much to think any one so young and charming as you are were unhappy, but how can I believe it when I look at you!"

Madame Poplus thought the interchange of sentiment had gone far enough. She remembered her daughter Gelinotte's caution about the sous-lieutenant's poverty.

"A fine marriage Mademoiselle de Messart is making," interrupted the mamma. "M. Danel has twelve thousand francs a year (440*l.*)"

"But he has very bad health," observed Raymond; "threatened with a spine complaint."

"Threatened people live long, M. Savoisy, and twelve thousand francs make up for a great deal. Stephanie de Messart is not in her first youth; she is twenty-four if she is a day."

"Twenty-five in a month, mamma," put in Nathalie. "Mademoiselle de Remy says Stephanie is quite radiant; she has got a beautiful diamond ring for her engaged ring — a yellow diamond, and heaps of presents keep arriving."

"Well, child, that's natural enough where there's money. Money can't make happiness, M. Savoisy; but the want of it may mar happiness."

"I have seen some poor people happy, Madame."

Madame Poplus shook her head disconsolately.

"Health and money, money and health, and I defy you to be unhappy," said Père Poplus. "I know what it is not to have a hundred francs, and what it is to have them — a great difference. I can tell a man who has money, and one who has not, only by their way of walking: money makes a man hold up his head, money makes him speak out his mind to préfet or beggar."

"There's something else, luckily for me, which teaches men to hold up their heads," said Raymond, laughing; adding, in answer to M. Poplus' look of inquiry, "Drill."

"Oh! certainly, certainly," said the surprised Poplus; "besides, a fine young man like you has all the world before him. *I* began with nothing: you may be a millionaire yet."

"I shall be satisfied with something less;" and Raymond took his leave.

Instead of returning to the town, Raymond walked up a hill, from whence he knew there was a view to be had of Tremereus House. Fortune favoured him. A small figure in white was pacing up and down one of the garden-walks. He had a strong piercing sight, and could perfectly distinguish Madame de Beaupré's every movement. A great tenderness filled his heart as he watched her. It was not from her lips he would ever have heard issue such low admirations as those he had listened to from those "bon Poplus." Madame de

Beaupré was a true woman, with all a woman's generosity, ardour, repugnances, and inconsistencies — warm-hearted, easily moved, and without a taint of meanness. He judged her more truly than those who had known her for years. To love a person is not always to be deceived as to their character. Madame de Beaupré might do wrong; but her errors, whatever they chanced to be, would proceed from a fault of judgment, not from narrowness of heart. He believed he might have won her, had he dared to let her see the great love she had inspired; and he believed she would have accepted that love. His eyes moistened as he thought how he had shown her neglect and avoidance in return for courtesy and even kindness. He was aware that it was her notice which had given him a place in the society of the town; but for her, he would have been as overlooked as when he was Sergeant Savois. Those "bon Poplus," whose acquaintance his mother recommended him so earnestly to cultivate, how he wished she could have heard their conversation!

Up to this time, Raymond had looked upon mankind as divided into two classes — the fortunate and the unfortunate: those "who had all, and those who had nothing." Now he perceived that all were subject to the same law; there was no such thing as "absolute good." Mortals must learn to content themselves with "well-nigh," with "almost." As soon as any of us have learned this lesson, we become daily more tolerant,

more indulgent — less prone to envy. Who can be envious when there is a certainty that, in the most splendid destiny, there is a drawback?

Raymond's meditations were put an end to by Madame de Beaupré vanishing from the garden. He went down the hill in the full persuasion that his fate and that of Madame de Beaupré's were severed. His road to his lodgings did not lie past Tremereus House; but scarcely knowing how it had happened, he found himself before the great iron gates. Godard, the Substitut du Procureur Impérial, had arrived at the same point from an opposite direction. The two men lifted their hats ceremoniously to one another, and then M. Gustave Godard, as it was Madame de Beaupré's reception-day, taking it for granted that Raymond was on the same mission as himself, motioned to the officer to precede him. Logically, and in obedience to his good resolutions, Raymond should have passed on, but the dog in the manger feeling took possession of him. No; he could not allow M. Gustave Godard the chance of a *tête-à-tête* with the Vicomtesse. He knew that with women the Substitut's manner was a clever combination of boldness and tenderness; that he was often sentimental, mystical in his nomenclature: they were modern apostles, priestesses of society, "regenerators, purer even in their greatest aberration than the best of men."

A great many of his fair listeners believed him and

lectured him, with an admirable faith in themselves, on morals and religion. There is something agreeable in being called an angel. Even that laughing Madame de Beaupré was tickled by the epithet when used judiciously.

Among men, Godard's scepticism on all points and his cynicism, principally as regarded women, were things to shudder at.

For all this, Raymond Savoisy detested Monsieur le Substitut du Procureur Impérial, and the idea of his being seated near Madame de Beaupré, and alone with her, made the sous-lieutenant savage. He deceived himself very egregiously when he thought that had Monsieur Gustave been a better man, he could have been resigned to know that he was assuring the Vicomtesse she was a "regenerator" for such lost sheep as he was.

Madame de Beaupré instantly divined the want of harmony between her two visitors. There is something almost pathetic in the way women strive to reconcile inimical male spirits who meet by ill-luck in their drawing-room. And the injustice of man's judgment of the *beau sexe* is never more apparent than in such contingencies, particularly that of the individual who especially interests the lady. "So deuced polite," "so uncommonly civil to that fellow," are the sentences recorded against the pacificatress.

Every opinion given by Gustave was disputed by

Raymond; the war in Italy, the expedition to Mexico, were warmly discussed; Raymond describing both as noble disinterested enterprises that would redound to the honour and glory of their promoter to the end of time. Gustave qualifying them as signal follies, unnatural, &c.

"I hate war, but I adore the bravery of our soldiers," said Madame de Beaupré.

"Bravery! All men are brave when they must be so," said Godard; "mankind are always raising temples to a god of their own inventing. Animal courage we call it, because we share the instinct with the beasts of the field."

"I can't argue the point," returned Madame de Beaupré, "but whenever I read an account of one of our great battles, my blood runs faster and my heart beats, beats," here there was a sweet smile to Raymond; then she went on with a well-assumed sprightliness, "Let us leave war for something pleasanter. Do you know, M. Savois, that we are actually going to have two evenings of Mademoiselle Delaporte at Magny le Sec? There's an advance for Magny! 'Progress,' isn't that the consecrated word for change?"

"I saw the playbills as I came from the Faubourg," answered Raymond, dryly.

"Mademoiselle Delaporte is transcendant as the 'Capeline bleue,'" said Godard, "literally overwhelming in the scene where Camille comes in and finds her

hanging over her child; it is when the boy recovers consciousness and calls him papa that he makes her a proposal of marriage, and hears her story."

"A situation that would kill any man who really loved her," said Raymond. "Any man I mean who had not a coarse nature."

"I differ from you entirely," said Godard. "Only a man of the most refined feeling, one who could distinguish between vice and misfortune, would have acted as Camille did."

"This 'Capeline bleue,' nevertheless had passed several years living comfortably on the pension furnished her by her child's father. At twenty-five, with the experience that the world and time give, it yet required Madame Aubray's remonstrances to awaken her to a consciousness of the degradation of her position," said Raymond.

"For my part, I don't see that the 'Capeline bleue' was a bit worse than a young lady who goes before the maire and the priest in obedience to her parents. The 'Capeline bleue' obeyed her parents, and I see no reason why she should not have been considered as a widow."

"I protest against such a comparison," said Raymond, his eyes in a blaze.

"Public opinion is against you, M. Savoisy, it has approved the conclusion."

"Submitted to it," retorted Raymond, "but I am

confident that not one person of sense and feeling but was revolted by that conclusion. Had the hero been as delicate-minded as the author wishes us to believe, such a marriage was impossible. Separation — death, were the only solutions of such a situation; there is no out-reasoning laws laid down by our hearts. Victor Hugo followed truth when he makes Didier say to Marion Delorme, 'Let me die; I shall play the spy, — hide from you a thousand thoughts of the past — you will be wretched. Let me die.' The most audacious pen cannot disentangle certain complications of life."

Raymond's animation and indignation became him; there was no doubting that he felt as he spoke.

Gustave rose, and addressing Madame de Beaupré cavalierly enough, said, "Well, belle dame, may I still hope for your commands to secure a box for to-morrow evening, or has M. Savoisy's eloquence prevailed against me?"

"Oh, dear no! I always like to do things people advise me against. If it will not be giving you too much trouble, pray secure me a box."

"Trouble? quite the contrary: and I feel sure," went on Gustave, "that with your excellent heart and your generous feelings you will side with Madame Aubray, and be one of the warmest supporters of the Capeline bleue. Woman has no higher mission than the rehabilitation of her sex, and she is never so much an angel as when raising the fallen." With a sweeping

bow the Substitut left the room, well-satisfied with his peroration, and convinced that Madame de Beaupré was so also.

As Monsieur Godard passed through the door, Madame de Beaupré's eyes fell on Raymond. At sight of the disgust so legible on his face, she forgot propriety altogether, and burst into a merry laugh.

He looked at her in surprise.

"I am laughing at you, Monsieur Savois." "

"I will not be so untruthful as to say I am glad to be the cause of your merriment, Madame. In what way have I made myself ridiculous?" "

"If you could only have seen your face in the glass as the amiable M. Godard left the room!" "

"To speak frankly, Madame, I dislike Monsieur Godard's sentiments, manners, person — in short, everything about him is disagreeable to me." "

"Nevertheless, he is gentle, polite, careful not to offend." "

"He is very fortunate to possess your good opinion, Madame. I have the honour to present you my respectful homage." "

Without appearing to hear this leave-taking, Madame de Beaupré went on, "I should never have supposed you to be so severe — so very harsh in your judgments of women." "

"Not of women in general; but of one woman in particular. What would be a venial error in others

would be a deadly, unpardonable crime for me in the person I loved."

"You are alluding to the case of this Capeline bleue," said Madame de Beaupré.

"That is an extreme one," answered Raymond. "But all trifling, every species of coquetry, modes of dressing unbecoming a modest woman, all excessive love of pleasure would be faults I could not pardon in one I loved."

"Poor Monsieur Savoisy!" ejaculated Madame de Beaupré, in a mocking tone. "You are a true descendant of the Puritans." Then with an assumption of gaiety, she added, "how stupid I am. I understand you now. By describing what you hate you describe the perfect person to whom your heart is given."

"Madame!"

"Pardon the frankness of my allusion."

"I don't understand it. Perhaps, Madame, you will be so good as to explain your meaning?"

"No, I will not be so good. Explanations and arguments weary me."

Raymond, who had remained standing, hat in hand, repeated the formula, "I have the honour to present my respectful homage," and took two steps towards the door, his hand was on the lock, when Madame de Beaupré said, in a loud staccato voice, the sign of strong emotion in her, "Of all things I detest, it is hypocrisy."

Raymond turned towards her, and said —

“It was my plain-speaking that offended you.”

“Another mistake, M. Savoisy. I was not offended in the least; why should I be? Unless indeed, you meant the flattering portrait of the woman you could not love, for me.”

There was scorn in her eyes and on her lips.

“I confess that I think the present fashion of women’s dress and behaviour odious and reprehensible.”

Madame de Beaupré had a strong inclination to reply, “You are right and I am wrong.” She respected and admired his sturdiness, but a feminine spirit of contradiction made her say —

“Everybody has not reached the respectable age of thirty,” (that was a hit at Christian’s age), “what suits an old maid, may not be suitable for every one else, and going against fashion may proceed as much from vanity, as doing as others do. Besides, people of a certain rank cannot exactly rule themselves, as can those in a lower position.”

Madame de Beaupré met the look of displeased surprise in Raymond’s eyes, and stopped abruptly. She was perfectly aware that she had spoken meanly and unworthily; but at that given moment she would have said anything to show Raymond how completely indifferent she was to his opinion.

There is always some hate in love, and no question

more difficult to solve than how a woman feels towards a man. He may secretly dominate her every thought, and the world be none the wiser — the guess of the one moment be destroyed in the next.

The pause that now ensued was like that between two combatants seeking to measure each other's strength before a deadly struggle, or like the hesitation that precedes the venturing on some act or word that must be decisive.

They might have fallen into each other's arms, and confessed the love that was convulsing their hearts, or they might have spoken words that must have parted them for ever, had not the handle of the door turned, and Berthe come in, holding a letter in her hand.

"For you, mamma. See what a beautiful seal; a lion dancing on a crown, just like what Miss Power showed me on Cœur de Lion's hat."

The spell was broken — the crisis over, without result. Once more Raymond tendered his respectful homage and was gone.

Madame de Beaupré sat for many minutes without moving. She kept her hand pressed on her heart; she was in pain, actual, physical pain; the contraction made her feel sick.

"Mamma, why don't you read your letter?" asked Berthe, coveting the large red seal.

The child's voice forced Madame de Beaupré to rouse herself.

"Give me the seal, mamma."

The mother, as she gave it, stopped, and passionately kissed the little curly head.

The letter was from M. d'Esbryat; he had been commissioned by the old Duchesse de C— G—, to ask Madame de Beaupré's hand in marriage for the present Duc de C— G—.

Monsieur d'Esbryat detailed all the numerous advantages of such an alliance — the best match in France — great wealth — a fine old title; the Duc himself of suitable age, a man of elegant tastes, great knowledge of life, anxious to taste the delights of a congenial union. M. d'Esbryat affectionately pressed the young widow to accept of this offer, for her own sake and that of Berthe.

At another moment Madame de Beaupré would have been highly diverted by her cousin's antiquated stilted style. Now she was struck by a sort of panic. Was it not strange that this letter should have arrived in the moment it did? Was it a Providential warning? Thoughts crowded pell mell on her. She could not for her life see clearly into her heart. It was the seat of a struggle between old prejudices and new feelings, a confused comparing of two possible destinies. She had always had a distaste for *mésalliances*, more particularly when the superior rank was on the woman's side. Clearly, she had been very foolish, and must pay the penalty for her folly; in other words, she must give up

seeing M. Raymond Savois. At this decision, she was overcome by a pang such as she had never felt before. She even uttered some cry, for Berthe ran to her, asking what was the matter.

"Nothing," was the answer.

The little girl, with that sudden reproduction of a past impression, which makes children so often what the French call "*des enfans terribles*," asked, —

"Why have I no brothers or sisters, mamma?"

"Because God has sent you none."

"But I want some to play with. May I pray to God for some?"

"No; certainly not."

A complete change of thought ensued; involuntary smiles passed over Madame de Beaupré's face. She laughed aloud, and it was — believe it, fair reader, for it is true — she laughed at the recollection of Raymond's angry face. It was not a laugh of derision, but a tender merriment, closely allied to weeping. She had a short delicious dream, but one that no woman ever tells, unless, indeed, during the moon called honey; told in whispers, under the pleasant protection of twilight.

The next thing Madame de Beaupré did was to go to her writing-table and write a short note, not to M. d'Esbryat, empowering him to accept of the offer of his Grace the Duc de C— G—, but a note of invitation to M. Raymond Savois, for a soirée not in con-

temptation ten minutes ago. Forgetful alike of her self-confession of folly, and of her resolution to give up Raymond's society, she could think of nothing, dread nothing, but that he had taken leave of her for ever. She must and would see him.

No sooner, however, was the envelope directed, than note and envelope were torn into the smallest possible pieces, so that the most inquisitive eye should not discover how silly she had been.

At dinner Madame de Beaupré was very pale, and evidently at odds with herself and the world. She declared several times she was as tired as if she had walked up to the top of that dreadful hill on which M. Savoisy had wanted to perch the chalet. If put there, it might as well not be built, for she could never get there.

"I warned him of that," said Christian, surprised at the tone, and of this unnecessary dragging in of Raymond's name.

"Did you really warn him? and he persisted. I should not allow of that, Mademoiselle," and Madame de Beaupré spoke with contemptuous irony.

Christian reddened, but answered nothing to an attack, as far as she could see, without rhyme or reason. Perhaps it was this absence of denial which fretted Madame de Beaupré into saying, —

"Men are all selfish, tyrannical, exacting, and ego-tistical; severe for women, and indulgent for them-

selves. The only way to live in peace with them is to be more selfish, more exacting, more egotistical than they are. Don't forget my advice, Mademoiselle." It was the inner sting that was venting itself. "And now I must go and dress to play my part in the 'human comedy.' Have you ever ventured to read Balzac, Mademoiselle? What pictures he paints of men and women, and they are true."

"It is far easier to paint vice than virtue," began Miss Power.

"Dear Mademoiselle, spare me; I hate sermons as well as martyrs."

"I beg your pardon, Madame."

"I ought rather to beg yours, Mademoiselle. I am out of sorts, and rude and disagreeable. It eases my mind, as swearing does men's. Please to forgive me," and the Vicomtesse, as she left the room, blew a kiss to Miss Power. Christian felt there was a storm in the air. It would be of no use, however, to perplex herself with conjectures. Some one or other had once said to her, when you have any discomfort, not to be remedied by any effort of your own, take to some manual occupation. Dig in the garden, or practise Beethoven. She sat down to the piano to conquer sonata No. 14.

Madame de Beaupré was not yet at the end of her inconsistencies.

The new Bishop of the department had arrived in Magny le Sec that morning, to make his visits of

ceremony to the Préfet, and the various religious communities. He would be present at the evening *réunion* of the Préfecture. Madame de Beaupré knew this, and knew also that it was etiquette for all the ladies, who should appear on this occasion, to be dressed in high dresses. There had been consultations as to toilettes, and the wife of the Procureur Impérial had decided to wear a chambery gauze, and the handsome Madame Folignon a white tulle; both gauze and tulle of the most dazzling and provoking transparency; but, being high to the throat, were conformable to the letter if not to the spirit of the custom.

Madame de Beaupré thought it possible that M. Savoisy might be there, and out of sheer waywardness, and with the most audacious disregard of bishops and vicars, chose to wear one of those dresses which, to the male spectator, seem as though the body of it had been forgotten — exactly of the style and fashion Raymond had stigmatized so forcibly that afternoon. It was certainly, if not very proper, very becoming.

The Vicomtesse had never been in better looks. Agitation had given a lovely pink flush to her cheeks, and made her eyes shine like stars.

“One might light candles at Madame’s eyes,” exclaimed the waiting-maid.

Madame saw perfectly well that she was beautiful. Her heart swelled with triumph. Beauty gives power, privilege, victory. To do her justice, poor little woman,

her only wish at that moment was that Raymond Savoisie could see her, and that in spite of himself he *should* pardon one of the sins he had pronounced unpardonable. As his image rose before her, something like a cloud dimmed her eyes. Involuntary tears, why or wherefore she could not have told, hung on the lashes. She said suddenly, —

“I have a great mind after all to wear my blue silk.”

“The blue silk!” ejaculated Mademoiselle Justine, “Madame can’t think of such a thing; Madame is perfect as she is. Ma foi, what’s the use of having shoulders like Madame’s if no one sees them? Every one has not such dimples.”

“Give me my guipure pelerine, then.”

Justine brought the pelerine and placed it on the shoulders, saying, with a face of disgust, —

“It spoils all.”

Mephistopheles had taken the form of Mademoiselle Justine to combat the influence of a pure love. Mademoiselle Justine’s face of disgust carried the day.

Madame de Beaupré conquered her new-born repugnance, and went to the Préfecture with all the praised dimples displayed for the benefit of the “gandins” of Magny le Sec.

She had forgotten the Duke de C — G —’s proposal, and had left M. d’Esbryat’s letter in the pocket of her morning gown. Within the next hour it will have

been read by Mademoiselle Justine, and communicated to her fellow-servants. Within the following twenty-four hours all the world of Magny le Sec would be in the secret.

As for Raymond, he returned to his lodgings, not in the calmest of moods; he even omitted to smile, as he passed, on his landlady's humpbacked child. He smoked that evening, heaven alone knows how many pipes, not those of peace, however.

Being excessively jealous and angry, all his thoughts were tainted by hatred and contempt for M. Gustave Godard and women in general. He even recalled the fine old story of Eve and the serpent, as a striking and undeniable example of that natural perversity of the *beau sexe* which makes vice always more alluring to them than virtue.

CHAPTER X.

A Soirée and a Dinner.

THERE are eighty-nine departments in modern France, and in each capital of these eighty-nine departments there is a Préfecture — a Government House.

A Préfet in the days of the first Napoleon received orders from the Emperor alone. He was a Viceroy, and his wife a vice-Queen. Under the present parliamentary *régime*, he is under the command of the Minister of the Interior — not so powerful as fifty years ago, but still the chief personage of the department.

The Préfecture is looked upon not only as a centre of departmental government, but as the centre of departmental entertainments. The ladies of the capital and its neighbourhood expect, as their right, so many balls, so many soirées at the Préfecture.

They say — “We are not at all grateful for these entertainments, they are obliged to give them.”

But no — there is no actual obligation, though it has been something more than suspected that such and such Préfets have been put on the shelf for not entertaining.

Monsieur le Préfet and Madame la Préfette of Magny le Sec were as generally liked as such persons

usually are. It is a piece of good fortune when the Préfet's wife has a gracious, affable manner, and has the gift of making people pleased with themselves. The Préfette of Magny le Sec was an excellent wife and mother, and of a great simplicity of character — but she was the most absent of women. She was always in the clouds at the wrong moment, and many stories were current of her miraculous powers of silence.

The Magny ladies accused her of having two manners — one for Madame de Beaupré, the Receiver General, and others of that calibre, and one for the less exalted. The poor lady, when such an accusation reached her, said —

“What would you have? For twenty-five years I have been seeing forced smiles, and hearing made-up speeches; listening to echoes, and sickening at the way the women sit like children in company, so polite and tiresome.”

Madame la Préfette had not Madame Poplus's inestimable advantage of looking older than she was. Thanks to a fine complexion and flowing hair, which time had neither thinned nor silvered, she appeared several years younger than her real age. Time had been civil, and spared her many of his irreparable outrages, but her acquaintances were bitter at this favouritism. Great care was taken that strangers should

be aware that the Préfette had certainly seen her fiftieth birthday.

The Préfet himself was a type of his class — stout, *very* — with a red face. When he headed a procession, he gave you the idea of a man going to execution, and already half stupefied. He played every evening at whist, and had a trick of tapping in a friendly manner on the stomachs of those in authority under him. Nevertheless, he got small credit for affability, having in effect very limited powers of conversation. It was whispered that he was fond of women's society. It might easily be so; but all that Magny le Sec had to say in support of the allegation was, that he stared at every pretty face with one eye shut, as connoisseurs do at pictures. He was very deaf of one ear.

It was Madame de Beaupré's privilege to say and to do as she pleased; but this evening, when she appeared in a low dress, so very low, at the recollection of the presence of Monseigneur the Bishop and his vicars, there was a general shudder of consternation. Madame la Préfette, with unusual vivacity, hastened to the culprit, saying —

"My dear, you have forgotten Monseigneur."

"Oh, no! I remembered he could not see two inches beyond his nose, and Monsieur le Vicaire always turns his back on me."

Having delivered this speech in her most childish voice, Madame de Beaupré advanced towards the pur-

blind prelate, and made him the prettiest obeisance possible.

Monseigneur had sight enough to perceive that something more than commonly brilliant was before him, and in a deep broken bass voice pronounced some greeting that sounded very like, "Charmed to see you, *belle dame*." But, of course, it was something else — something more in keeping with his violet stockings. The Vicar performed an evolution on his heels, bowing his head in the contrary direction to the lovely curtsying lady.

The party was not only serious, but decidedly gloomy. The Demoiselles des Tremereus were there, on account of His Grace. On his right hand sat Mademoiselle de Tremereus, listening with the expression Donatello has given to one possessed by a demon. Her mouth was ajar, the under lip drooping, showing the lower teeth. As she herself declared, she was drinking in Monseigneur's words. A large swallow she must have had, for he had a thick, fat utterance, and between each of his words there was an asthmatic grunt; but by his side Mademoiselle de Tremereus felt nearer heaven, and no nightingale's song had ever sounded so sweetly in her ears as the Bishop's snuffle and grumble.

If the Bishop could not see, Mademoiselle de Tremereus could, and her indignation at the affront to clerical propriety, by the display of Madame de

Beaupré's dimpled shoulders, flashed from the old spinster's eyes.

"How cross you look to-night," said Madame de Beaupré, caressingly, to the eldest of the "Hundred and Fifty."

"Distressed, Vicomtesse, distressed!"

"Dear me! I am so sorry."

The three sisters closed round the Prelate to hedge him in from such a snare to the eye. The ladies working at the round table gladly made room for the offending Vicomtesse.

The Substitut came out of a corner, and placed himself behind Madame de Beaupré. Every fault has to be expiated. A shiver ran through Madame de Beaupré as she *felt* the Substitut's eyes wandering over the shoulders that she had wilfully exposed to public view. She hardened her heart against this novel discomfort. She did not, of course, confess to herself that Raymond's words and opinions had anything to do with her uneasiness; on the contrary, the more she suffered from Gustave Godard's pertinacious staring, the higher rose her resentment against M. Savois's impertinence.

"Have you ever seen archangels' eyes?" asked Madame Folignon, in a discreet whisper.

"Have archangels really ever visited the earth?" returned Madame de Beaupré.

"Madame Maillard asserts that the new Vicar of Nôtre Dame has archangel's eyes."

"What an old goose!"

"The same as ever; years have not cured her."

"You should have heard her talking of this Abbé Fossin! She raves of him, and says it transported her into another world to hear him speak of the suavity of love."

"Divine love, I hope?"

"She did not say 'divine.'"

"Poor old lady! there is a coolness between her and her contemporary, Madame Bouroche, about this Abbé. Madame Bouroche declares he can't live; that the bigness of his soul will be the death of him. She laughs at Madame Maillard, and tells everyone that her attentions for the Abbé are beyond what is proper."

Just at this point there came the interruption of tea. The Préfette went to the tea-table just as her English counterpart might have done; and the young ladies, glad of any cause for movement, ran about with cups and milk and sugar, offering cakes with a pretty grace that allowed of no refusal. Taking advantage of the bustle, Madame de Beaupré ensconced herself in a high-backed arm-chair, which as effectually protected the naughty shoulders from sight as any crape shawl.

Madame de Beaupré had not perceived that the shelter she had sought brought her into the immediate

vicinity of the second Mademoiselle de Tremereus. She was made aware of the fact by the question, in a loud voice, "How are your Protestants, Madame de Beaupré?"

The Vicomtesse was one of those persons never at a loss for a reply. She answered, "Mees Povère is very well, and getting accustomed to living among Catholics!"

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes; though she has found out that they are neither as wise as serpents, nor as harmless as doves." Madame de Beaupré always spoke in infantine tones when she meant mischief.

Mademoiselle Virginie, a massive woman, with a voice to match her person, gave herself a roll in her chair, and said, with a short laugh, "We have an old proverb, 'Tell me who you frequent, and I will tell you who you are.' You have caught the Protestant trick of bringing the words of the Bible into worldly conversations."

"M. Jourdain talked prose without knowing it, and I am in the same predicament with my quotation from the Bible, which I never read, I assure you. I got those naughty words from the 'Imitation.'"

The Bishop, who had caught just enough of this fencing between the two ladies to misunderstand it entirely, here snuffled out, "Ah, very good! — h'm, h'm, — a sweet child — h'm, h'm — always read the

‘Imitation,’ my dear — h’m, h’m — it will do you good — h’m — if you are good, you will be happy — h’m, h’m, h’m — therefore be good — h’m, h’m, h’m.”

A reverential silence had reigned in the salon during the delivery of these words, in which, as Mademoiselle de Tremereus devoutly remarked, “all the wisdom of ages was condensed.”

The Bishop, feeling he had ably acquitted himself, rose to take leave in the moment of his triumph, as all clever folks do. In the bustle of his departure, Madame de Beaupré heard Mademoiselle Virginie muttering, “If she thinks to get those Protestants into society, she will find herself mistaken.”

Formerly Madame de Beaupré would have playfully exaggerated the incidents of the evening into a farce that might have been played as a “*lever de Rideau*” at any theatre with success; as it was, she left the Préfecture in low spirits. She had the habit of telling Justine how the other ladies were dressed; this night she sat silent, lost in her own thoughts, which Justine considered justifiable, seeing that she was about to become a Duchess.

The waiting-maid had ceased to have much respect for the title of Vicomtesse — it was so common; who was to know the difference between a new and an old title? — but a Duchess! It was to her surreptitious knowledge of coming events that Madame de Beaupré

owed Justine's respectful forbearance for her meditations.

With the first opening of her eyes the next day, Madame de Beaupré remembered M. d'Esbryat's letter, and remembering, understood that she must not neglect to answer it. She had not any doubt as to that answer. She should decline the proposal. The dominant thought of her mind, while enunciating to herself this decision, was the impression Raymond Savoisy would receive if he could know that she had refused a Duke. "It would satisfy him, she hoped, that she was not the mere worldling it pleased him to suppose her; it would not be one of those crimes he could not pardon in the woman he loved;" and here her face dimpled all over with smiles.

Mademoiselle Justine, who was arranging her hair, saw this radiation of pleasure reflected in the mirror, and set it about in the servants' hall that "*Madame était dans le plus grand contentement qu'on puisse imaginer.*"

One half of Madame de Beaupré's wish was granted. Raymond Savoisy knew before nightfall of the Duc de C— G—'s proposal. He was assured also that the Duc had been accepted; and he believed it.

At six precisely of the afternoon of the day after the Préfecture soirée, Raymond Savoisy entered the Poplus salon.

He was in uniform, for the very good reason that

he had not enough in his purse to buy himself a black dress suit for the evening. He had not a farthing beyond his pay, and that was eighteen hundred francs, or seventy-two pounds sterling. The family income had never exceeded four thousand francs! and yet, in spite of this *quasi* poverty, the Pasteur was hospitable, generous, and charitable. Self-denial was a habit with all his children.

Pasteur Savoisy's advice to his son will never be as world-famous as that of Polonius to Laertes. He said, —

“The fewer the wants, the wiser and more independent the man. When you are tempted to rail against the inequalities of fortune, look downwards instead of upwards. Serve God first, and then your Sovereign; make no debts; and give a tithe of what you have to the poor.”

It was Raymond's duty, therefore, to wear his uniform; and virtue had its reward; for he looked specially well in that mixture of blue and red.

M. Poplus was alone in the salon, looking fresh, clean, and shining, reminding you of a horse freshly groomed. The first words he said to Raymond showed what tact he possessed.

“Ah, ha! mon sous-lieutenant; so you always keep the colours displayed?”

Raymond, brought up in reverence for truth, answered manfully, —

"I have no plain clothes."

"None the worse for that, my boy. I had not always a salon like this, a *forte piano*, or silver spoons. You'll have your share of luck, I make no doubt. You are as well-built a young fellow as I have seen for some time."

It suddenly occurred to Raymond that M. Poplus had made his fortune in some outlying region, where, exactly, he did not know; but the last remark sounded like that of some old slave-dealer, accustomed to appraise men's thews and sinews. He felt a rising distaste for this "bon Poplus," which was an unpleasant feeling for a guest to entertain towards a host, and not at all conducive to pleasant conversation.

Luckily a ring at the door-bell diverted M. Poplus's attention. "Only M. Bertin," he observed to Raymond.

M. Bertin was a dashing little man of about five-and-forty, with lively, unsettled, hungry eyes — eyes that never made friends with you. Yet M. Bertin might have been supposed to be a popular man, for you met him everywhere; in fact, ladies took care, before they sent out invitations for an evening party, to ascertain that M. Bertin was disengaged. He was one of those superficial men who shine in general society. He could talk on any subject; his only real talent lay in forcing his interlocutor to keep down to his (M. Bertin's) level. He was invaluable to mothers with

young daughters just come out. He sang seconds and danced with them; gave them advice, with this inevitable conclusion: "*I* and your mother are the only persons from whom you will hear the truth;" and one of the truths he oftenest preached to these beginners was "distrust," not of themselves, but of their companions first, and of strangers second.

He believed himself gifted with *l'esprit français*, which means the delicately mordant wit of the 18th century. What he really possessed was an *esprit léger*. He was evidently a lightminded man, and as such, more inclined to believe in evil than in good. He was unrivalled in the art of dropping a mischievous word—in sowing suspicion.

Monsieur Bertin had been greatly encouraged by Monsieur and Madame Poplus; they believed him to be all powerful in Magny le Sec. They sought his counsels on every occasion, and were for ever saying to Nathalie—"It is Monsieur Bertin's opinion that you should do so-and-so, or, Monsieur Bertin's advice is this or that."

At first Nathalie had rather taken a sort of filial liking for Monsieur Bertin, and followed his suggestions; lately she had grown restive, and complained that she did not approve of his tappings on the arm, or of his sudden pressures of the hand. He might be old, but not old enough for that sort of thing. Besides, what had he ever done for all their dinners. He had pro-

mised they should be asked to Madame de Beaupré's parties — and had they? No, not even once.

"At all events, don't let us make an enemy of the man; people who have little power to do you good, always have enough to harm you," returned Monsieur Poplus.

To see him receive Monsieur Bertin to-day, you would have thought Monsieur Poplus delighted in him. He patted him on the shoulder, appealed to him on all subjects, and applauded all he said. Did Monsieur Bertin believe in Monsieur Poplus's good-will? Probably as little as Poplus believed in Monsieur Bertin's. After all, nothing persuades so surely as truth. If you are friendly, there needs no hand-shakings, nor slappings, nor tappings — no explosions of any kind.

Madame Poplus, flushed with her superintendence in the kitchen, next appeared in a rustling silk, and long, wide blue streamers to her cap. Before her inquiries after the health of the two gentlemen had been answered, Madame Gelinotte and Nathalie appeared. The elder sister wore an air of interrogation; as for Nathalie, she had made up her mind that this Monsieur Savois was of as little use as Monsieur Bertin, and showed therefore that she thought "the whole thing a bore." When a French woman of any class or age says *Je m'ennuie*, you may banish hope of any kind as regards her. The ennui of a matron of thirty leads to what Octave Feuillet names *une crise* — that of a young

lady of Nathalie's age to a marriage when there is a *dot*; to ill-health when there is no fortune. It is a misfortune for French single women that they have no outlet for their talents or activity. They are hedged in by such customs that an unmarried woman of seven or eight-and-twenty has as little liberty as when she was seventeen. She cannot read what her English prototype may read. She cannot visit or go a day's journey unchaperoned. She may not so much as walk through her native town alone. There are French mothers who, not considering Gounod's "Faust" fit for their daughters to see, have abstained themselves *because* they could not leave their daughters for an hour. A French young lady is married — guaranteed.

During the dinner, which was excellent, as is the rule and not the exception in France, Monsieur Bertin said to Raymond, with the condescension of a superior —

"We have met before, I believe, Monsieur?"

"I believe so," answered Raymond.

"Ah, yes! yes, at Mesdames C. D. E. F.," enumerating the leading families of Magny.

"You know the Vicomtesse de Beaupré very well, don't you, Monsieur Savoisy?" asked Nathalie, chafing at Monsieur Bertin's assumption of authority, for the little man showed he considered himself above his company. She put the question by way of setting him down.

"I have the honour of Madame de Beaupré's acquaintance," said Raymond stiffly, sensitive as a man usually is to any mention of the woman in whom he takes a peculiar interest.

"Ah, to be sure!" exclaimed Monsieur Bertin, addressing the young officer. "How amusing and piquant she is. How was it you were not at the Préfecture last night? You should have seen Mademoiselle de Tremereus when our pretty little friend came in dressed — or faith, undressed. The Bishop and his Vicars were present — the most serious of *réunions* — the poor Préfette, whose face grew as red as her ribbons, made some remonstrance. 'Monseigneur can't see, and the Vicars can turn their backs if they are uncomfortable,' was the answer she got."

"Madame de Beaupré was quite right. I like a woman of spirit," said Monsieur Poplus. "A glass of Chambertin to her health, Savoisie."

Raymond was not man of the world enough to swallow the wine.

"Rather injudicious, was it not?" murmured Madame Poplus.

"Humbug!" shouted Monsieur Poplus. "For my part I don't see why bishops are to have such a fuss made about them. I always speak my mind roundly. It's their business to look after our morals, not ours to save them from temptation. It doesn't hurt *me* to see a pretty woman's shoulders, eh, Bertin?"

"Not as long as the shoulders are as well worth seeing as those of the little Vicomtesse. Monsieur Bertin was too busy with the bones of his *Brochet de la Meuse* to see the scowl on Raymond's face.

M. Gelinotte kept the peace, by speaking for the first time since the commencement of dinner. He had acquired the talent of silence since his marriage, M. Poplus being in the habit of cutting him short with "What can you know of the matter, Gelinotte?"

It was with unusual firmness that Gelinotte said, "I heard at the club to-day that she is going to be married to the Duc de C— G—."

It was only Madame Gelinotte who remarked Raymond's expression of face and his change of colour at this announcement.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Bertin. "It was not known last night. Are you sure? Is it a positive fact?"

"M. Godard told it as one."

"Poor Gustave! he is fairly thrown over, then?" laughed Bertin. "It's a magnificent marriage. The Duc de C— G— is one of the first matches in France."

"Is he young?" asked Nathalie.

"What do you call young, Mademoiselle? Age is relative, you know."

"Young means young, and old old. I call thirty-

six old." Nathalie hoped she had hit M. Bertin very hard.

"Alas! then the Duc is old; he has attained the number of years you have named; but the Vicomte de Beaupré was upwards of forty when he married Mademoiselle Thérèse de Morville, who was just seventeen."

"Poor child!" muttered Madame Poplus.

"She is none the worse," went on Bertin. "She was early a widow, and has enjoyed life pretty well since that sad, perhaps I ought rather to say, happy event."

M. Bertin might now say what he pleased. Raymond was too completely absorbed by the news of the certainty of Madame de Beaupré's marriage to have ears to hear. Had any kind friend known of his previous reflections about the Substitut, the kind friend might have congratulated him that his wish as to the Vicomtesse finding a more suitable husband than Gustave Godard had been answered. Raymond had forgotten everything but M. Gelinotte's announcement. It is to be doubted whether any human being ever really rejoiced in the first moment of certainty that some great temptation, some folly was put out of his reach. There is, on such occasions, a distracting struggle between the heart-sickness of disappointment and the gladness of safety. But in spite of the pressure on his heart, Raymond performed pretty correctly

the duties of a guest, — listened patiently to Mademoiselle Nathalie's Patati and Patita; smiled when he paid his compliments to her voice; gave Madame Poplus the information she sought as to the number of his brothers and his sisters, and their ages, without making one blunder. At last it was ten o'clock, and he might take his leave. For the preceding quarter of an hour he had been meditating how best he could avoid being saddled with Bertin's company on the way home.

Bertin had perceived Raymond's brusquerie towards him; but Bertin belonged to that class who keep their displeasure to themselves, preferring rather to swallow their own words than to support them by deeds. He had become very courteous to Raymond since dinner, and, as they stood on the doorsteps together, observed, "I believe our road is the same?"

"I think not," was the curt rejoinder, and Raymond turned sharp round in the opposite direction.

Madame Gelinotte told her mother that same night, it would be useless to invite M. Savoisy to dinner any more; for she was satisfied of the truth of the report that he was in love with Madame de Beaupré.

"He must be mad, then; but who told you, my dear?"

"Mademoiselle Maxe."

"What! the ironer?" and Madame Poplus laughed.

"Those sort of people find out everything; and she irons for the Vicomtesse."

"The world is very different from what it was in my young days," said Madame Poplus. "When I was married, I had good strong linen pocket-handkerchiefs; and now the very staymakers have embroidered cambric! To think of that young man falling in love with a Vicomtesse! We shall have a revolution: you'll live to see it, my dear, though I mayn't."

CHAPTER XI.

Madame la Préfette's Paradise refused.

MADemoiselle JUSTINE's curiosity and long tongue produced that force of circumstances which decides the fate of individuals.

Early the following morning, the Demoiselles de Tremereus were in possession of the fact, that the offending Vicomtesse of the evening before, whom they had often and often qualified as the most frivolous and coquettish of women, was on the eve of placing a ducal coronet on her small, light head. They never could have thought such an event possible. M. de C— G—, who might have the pick and choice of the fairest and noblest from one end of France to the other; M. de C— G—, who might have raised his eyes without fear of repulse to one standing on the steps of the throne, — such a man to take it into his head to marry this little widow! pretty, certainly, but without height or grandeur, and as for fortune, very well; but nothing to tempt a C— G—.

Mademoiselle de Tremereus at once wrote a note to the Préfecture, while Mademoiselle Solanges, having caught sight of the supposed Duchess elect pacing up

and down one of the garden walks, went thither to meet her, as if by accident. Mademoiselle Solanges returned elate, after a five minutes' interview, and told her sister Virginie that the Vicomtesse had quite a pre-occupied manner — there could be no doubt of the truth of the news they had heard.

No wonder if Madame de Beaupré was something inattentive to Mademoiselle Solanges' platitudes, for Madame de Beaupré was trying to come to a clear understanding with herself, to disentangle the ravelled skein of her own wishes. She was struggling against the consciousness that while seeking to decide as to the Duc de C— G—'s proposal, the image of Raymond Savoisie obtruded itself. The underlying constant recollection of his words and looks was bewildering and oppressive. A seed falls into the ground, and after some days two little tender leaves peep forth; let the soil be ever so iron-bound, those delicate frail precursors pierce their way. The travail is accomplished in darkness and silence. It is much the same with our sentiments. Only when they begin to shoot into activity do we track back to the moment of their being sown.

Certainly this was what had happened to Madame de Beaupré. It had needed the little quarrel of the day before, and the Duc de C— G—'s proposal, to make her perceive the growing of her love for Raymond.

She was not without experience of the world and its ways. She knew with painful certainty that not one among those bound to her by relationship, that not one among the crowd of her acquaintances but would blame her, would consider that love a degradation, and deride the idea that Raymond was in a position of life to authorize an affection between them. On the other hand, there would be a chorus of approbation did she accept the Duc de C— G—, without one grain of preference for him, and that merely because he was a duke and wealthy. Having reached this point, light broke in on her, and she said aloud —

“But that is no reason why I should marry M. de C— G—,” and with her habitual impulsiveness, she ran into the house, and seated herself at the writing-table.

She had just written “My dear cousin,” when the shrill *timbre* of the porter’s lodge gave notice of an approaching visitor. The next instant Madame la Préfette was announced.

It is as well to note here that the title of *Préfette* is a provincialism. All the invitations from the Préfecture ran in the names of Monsieur le Préfet et Madame de Renneval.

“May I congratulate you, chère Dame, or is it to be kept a secret for the present?” asked Madame de Renneval, in a low, mysterious voice.

Madame de Beaupré's eyes opened very wide as she repeated —

"Congratulate me, why?"

"You mean it, then, to be a secret; but let me enlighten you, it is a secret already in the possession of the whole town."

"Will you tell it to me?"

Madame de Renneval laughed as she said —

"In plain words, I have come to congratulate you on your marriage with the Duc de C— G—."

"How could you know of his proposal. I only received it yesterday, and have not mentioned it to anyone."

"Half-a-dozen people have already spoken of it to me. I had a note this morning from Mademoiselle de Tremereus containing the news before I was dressed. The President (of the Tribunal) and the Procureur Impérial told the Préfet."

"It is extraordinary!" exclaimed Madame de Beaupré.

"Nevertheless true?" asked Madame de Renneval.

"Only partly. I *have* undoubtedly received a proposal from Monsieur de C— G—, that is all."

It was Madame de Renneval's turn to stare with astonishment.

"Is it possible you are hesitating?"

"Does that astonish you? Why?"

Question and answer is to most people the easiest

way of arriving at knowledge, and of clearing away the mistiness of their own ideas; very few can think out a subject in silence; objection is the flint that strikes sparks from the usual run of intellects.

"Frankly, yes," answered Madame de Renneval. "Altogether the offer is unexceptionable. Every possible advantage. Equality of rank — fortune — age, for Monsieur de C— G—, the Préfet says, is not more than thirty-five."

"Thirty-seven, M. d'Esbryat says," observed Madame de Beaupré, referring to the letter lying open on the blotting-book.

"A fine man — perfect ton," went on the Préfette, rather in an interrogative than affirmative tone.

"H'm! As for looks, he is like everybody else: smiles, you know, with all his teeth set as you see them in a dentist's case, and holds his hat, and dresses just as they all do; it's so difficult to distinguish one man from another in Paris!"

Madame de Renneval did not quite understand this speech; it was out of her beat. All her ideas were ruled, measured, and set in the dominant key of the day. For her, money was the indispensable thing; position, a second-rate consideration. Money and position combined, Paradise itself could offer nothing better. Where there was plenty of money there must be plenty of enjoyment. She would not have hesitated an instant had she been in Madame de Beaupré's place.

If the Vicomtesse had known what it was to be the wife of a Préfet of the third class, with a miserable thousand a year, she would have been more grateful to Providence for this Duke's offer.

She said, with the emphasis of one replying to some absurdity, "A most excellent marriage."

"All that my friends could desire," laughed Madame de Beaupré. "But I am the person who is to be married, and I have had the misfortune or fortune to have been married already. A girl does not know what she is doing when she marries, and she does so courageously: but a widow . . . ?"

"I don't see much need of courage to marry Monsieur de C— G—," persisted Madame de Renneval. At this conjuncture a tall elderly man, Monsieur Lefort, the most notable man of the town, entered the room, and Madame de Beaupré jumped up with alacrity to receive him. He shook hands with her gravely. All the upper classes of Magny le Sec had a respect, strongly imbued with fear, for Monsieur Lefort; the humbler world, a confidence and affection only controlled by veneration. Had he more talent than goodness, or more goodness than talent? It was difficult to decide. He avoided what is called society, and it sought him. Though his left hand knew not of the help his right bestowed, misfortune always turned its imploring eyes to him.

He was the one man in the Department who dared

to live according to his own will. Strange that the example was not followed, for Préfet, Bishop, Judges, and administrators were all Monsieur Lefort's very humble servants. "Had he pleased," said the Mayor, "he might have been our Deputy, and once Deputy nothing could have prevented his being Keeper of the Seals." Monsieur Lefort, once hearing this, doffed his little black silk cap, and said, "Much obliged. I prefer to be keeper of my liberty."

You would have said that Madame de Beaupré was one of the last persons in the world to gain the friendship of Monsieur Lefort. He, all vigour, reason, and sobriety; she, all lightness, frivolity, and impulse. But Monsieur Lefort was sagacious. He had first known Madame de Beaupré during the lifetime of M. de Beaupré. He had remarked how patiently she bore her husband's overbearing ways, and he had said to himself, "That little creature must have some strength of character: weakness never submits quietly." The interest she had then inspired had never entirely vanished. He had heard of all her follies and eccentricities, but he had always answered, "I suspect her of being better than she chooses to appear. She has character, that little woman." And from time to time he appeared in her salon.

"I interrupt you, ladies," he began, as he took the arm-chair Madame de Beaupré pushed towards him.

"Not at all," said Madame de Renneval, at the

same time gathering her shawl round her as with an intention of prompt departure.

"Have you heard the news?" asked Madame de Beaupré, laughing.

"That is what brought me to-day, for I knew it was not your day of reception. I have been told by scores of mouths of your approaching marriage, Madame. I have ventured to come and ask you as to the truth of what is said. It never does a woman good to have a false report of that kind gain ground."

"I must answer you as I answered Madame de Renneval—the news is partly true; though how the honour the Duc de C— G— has done me has got wind, is a puzzle to me."

"Probably because your waiting-maid read the letter over your shoulder, or you left it on your dressing-table."

"Is it possible that M. Lefort knows the weaknesses of our *femme de chambre*," exclaimed Madame de Renneval.

"Madame, I have one maid, a cook. I have some experience of her ways; she reads all the letters I don't burn or lock up. I judge of the species by the specimen under my eye."

"That horrid Justine," exclaimed Madame de Beaupré, "I remember now that I did leave M. d'Esbryat's letter in the pocket of my morning gown

I have the greatest mind to send her away this instant."

"No, no; on the whole she is a good girl" (M. Lefort was popularly supposed to know the character of every man, woman, and child in Magny); "besides you have the advantage of being aware of her faults, you will do well therefore to keep her. My mother used to tell a story of the Duchesse d'Abrantes. The Duchesse one day warned a guest that the servant in waiting was a spy. 'Good heavens!' said the visitor, 'why don't you discharge him at once.' 'Because I know what he is,' was the reply. 'I should be some time in discovering before which of my other servants I must be on my guard.' So it seems, fair lady, that for once the beldame gossip has told the truth."

"Not quite. In the first place I only know M. de G— by sight."

"What does that signify? you know him to be rich. I don't speak of his title; as that dates only from the first empire, it will count for nothing with you aristocrats; but he is rich, enormously rich."

"And you think that a temptation no woman can resist?"

"*Pardieu*, it is not a temptation, it is a necessity before which she bends. Once upon a time, Madame, mankind had four great interests—religion, politics, war, and love—they have added a fifth, or rather they have done away with love and put money in its

place. When I was twenty, youths were ready to blow their brains out for the sake of some affair of the heart; now-a-days young men are all preoccupied with the affairs of the Bourse. *Pardieu*, the women are not behindhand with the men. I know a young girl of two-and-twenty whose first thought on opening her eyes to a new day, is the state of the public funds. She has good talents, paints and plays, reads German and English well; she looks with scorn on the fine arts and those who profess them; the only subject she considers worthy of attention is the rise and fall of stocks. Money is like Aaron's serpent. Believe me in time, Madame, wealth is now-a-days the one object to be sought for in marrying."

"That is an exaggeration," said Madame de Renneval; "we take care to inquire into the character of the young men to whom we give our daughters."

"You ascertain that he is neither a drunkard nor a thief; but that his heart has been squeezed dry by selfish pleasures; that he believes in nothing, cares for nothing; that innocence and virtue are without flavour for him; that to rouse his senses he must have the bait of crime — does that trouble you? No; he has so much, your daughter so much; therefore they suit — presto, marry them! The girl sometimes fancies she loves this improvised suitor; usually she accepts, because *il faut se marier*. Do you read the novels of the day? I am told they are pictures of our

generation. If so, alas! for my poor young country-women."

Madame de Renneval rose from her chair.

"You are a dangerous man, Monsieur Lefort, I shouldn't wish my daughter to hear you. Sans adieu, chère Madame; au plaisir, Monsieur."

When the door had closed on the Préfet's wife, Monsieur Lefort laughed and repeated, —

"So I am to be signalled in future as a dangerous man for young ladies. Routine, routine, is what the world asks for."

"I am not going to marry M. de C— G—," said Madame de Beaupré, firmly.

"Do not let my opinions influence you; they belong as little to the age as I do myself."

"I had decided to refuse before I saw either you or Madame de Renneval."

"You are right, if you are acquainted with the Duke and do not like him. When I was a notary, I saw behind the scenes as much or more than the priest did in the confessional, and I came to the conclusion that our system as to marriages was the real cause of the corruption of our morals. Madame! the human being who loves has made an advance towards goodness. Love means self-abnegation, renunciation, self-constraint; it is, in fact, a moral law, and has been so from the beginning of the world, though we Christians are fond of arrogating to ourselves the mono-

poly. I speak of love, understand — not passion, the essence of selfishness, of a brutal egotism.”

“Thank you for believing me worthy of being so spoken to, of being capable of understanding you.” Great tears were rolling over Madame de Beaupré’s cheeks. She went on — “I am not such a heartless, empty-headed fool as people think me. Oh! M. Lefort, I was so unhappy when you first knew me. I hated, yes, I did really hate M. de Beaupré. I hated myself, and everybody, even poor little Berthe. I could not see any use in living, or why people should be born; I wished it was all over. I believed that everyone was unhappy; and I wondered, if God was all-good and all-powerful, why He should have created us only to be wretched! One day I went to see those Frankommes — I scarcely think it was from a good motive — and that merry M. Frankomme told me he had ten more grey hairs in his head from seeing his wife’s tooth drawn. It was ridiculous, wasn’t it?” She was half laughing, half crying. “It had such an effect on me! It was the first time I had an idea a man could care for his wife. After that I was more miserable, more wicked. Oh! no, I will not marry M. de C—G—.”

In this outburst of long pent-up feeling there was another proof for M. Lefort of his theory that there are aspects of a character which require some peculiar pressure to force them into light. He perceived that

Madame de Beaupré had one of those delicate, ardent natures, as prone to suffering as enjoyment. He knew also that the more rarely endowed the individual, the less chance of meeting with response. It is not sufficient to have much to give: it is necessary to find some one capable of receiving. It was in a voice of warning that he said, "You do well. Wait. Let happiness come of itself."

Left alone, Madame de Beaupré wrote her letter to M. d'Esbryat, committing the fault, of course, of declining M. le Duc de C— G—'s proposal on the plea that she did not intend to marry again. At that moment the plea was a true one.

It was much about the hour that she was writing this decision that Raymond Savoisy was listening to M. Bertin's assertion of her approaching marriage.

CHAPTER XII.

Conflict.

It was from Mademoiselle Virginie de Tremereus that Miss Power first heard of Madame de Beaupré's approaching marriage. The English governess was coming home from her daily walk when she met the youngest of "the ladies," dressed out as if for a ball. Mademoiselle Virginie had been the *Quêteuse* that morning at a mass performed in aid of some charity. Whenever Mademoiselle Virginie was to carry round the bag, the collection was sure to be good; for all the *beau monde*, who made a point to be there to laugh at her way of dressing, had to pay for their amusement. She was more outrageous than usual on this day: she had managed to adorn her person with all the colours of the rainbow. Her eyebrows and *bandeaux* were blacker than they were the day before, the white and red of her complexion in more startling contrast.

Christian would willingly have passed this specimen of human vanity with only a bow; but Mademoiselle Virginie came up to her with mincing steps, and said, with a simper painful to behold, "So you would not honour us at Nôtre Dame this morning, Mademoiselle.

The ceremony was magnificent, I assure you. But M. Mangin made an innovation that will set all the world taking. Ever since the time of Madame de Sévigné — as you probably know, Mademoiselle, you, who are so clever — oh! yes — every one speaks of your knowledge — ah! all English ladies know so much! — but I assure you, from the days of Madame de Sévigné, it has always been the custom for the *Quêteuse* only to lay her right hand on the wrist of the gentleman who is her cavalier. M. Mangin *would* put my arm within his, which made it very awkward; he presumed on my having chosen him to accompany me. Women have to be so on their guard, particularly single women. There's the 'Substitut' made so sure of Madame de Beaupré; he's nicely disappointed. A charming change for you this marriage will make, Mademoiselle."

"What marriage?" inquired Christian, changing colour in a remarkable manner.

"You have not heard that our lovely Vicomtesse is going to be married to the Duc de C— G—? Why, all Magny knows it."

"This is the first I have heard of it," returned Christian, in amazement.

"It surprises you; so it does me and my sisters. It seems very easy for some women to have as many husbands as they please; for my part, I don't profess to know how they manage it. This is better than her

first. The Duc de C— G— is as rich as Rothschild: his mother and sisters always had separate suites of rooms, and separate sets of servants and equipages — quite in royal style, though he is only the son of a Duke of the First Empire. His grandfather was a postilion; as for a great-grandfather, I don't suppose he ever had any. Gala days coming for you, Mademoiselle." Giving Miss Power no time for reply, she slid into one of her monologues. "She will not keep you, to tell tales of what went on here."

Christian, being aware of Mademoiselle Virginie's habit of talking to herself, remained silent. But with the dim consciousness that always beset her after one of her self-betrays, Virginie turned a sharp interrogating glance on Christian, and asked, —

"Did you speak?"

"No, Mademoiselle."

"Good morning," said Miss Virginie, hurriedly. "Good morning. My best compliments to Madame de Beaupré. Away she ambled. Christian overheard her saying, "Very well, Virginie; I don't think you looked your age to-day. But you mustn't be a fool. Don't believe Mangin's eyes. No, no."

The governess walked into the house, anxious to know what dependence might be placed on Mademoiselle Virginie's words. She met one servant after the other, and they all gave her a smile of intelligence. The young woman whose business it was to look after

the house-linen, said, "Good news, Mademoiselle?" What could Christian say but, "You allude to Madame de Beaupré's marriage?" The workwoman nodded assent, and afterwards assured everyone she saw, that the English governess had told her that Madame de Beaupré was going to be married immediately to the Duc de C— G—. It is rare that a false report has so good a foundation.

Madame Chuquet waylaid the De Beaupré chef Cristophe as he was coming from market, and entering into affable conversation with him, the ambulating feminine Gazette of Magny le Sec was able shortly after to inform all her acquaintances that she had it from unquestionable authority that the marriage would take place in three weeks. One person knew that after the marriage the Duc and Duchesse were going to Italy; another that they were invited by the Prince of Wales to England, a great friend of Monsieur de C— G—, more like a brother than a friend. It was reported that the ceremony was to be performed by the Archbishop of Paris, that the Emperor and Empress had been asked to be the "witnesses," and had consented; in short, before another forty-eight hours had passed, a regular programme of improbabilities was in full circulation.

It was weeks since Christian had been so light-hearted as after her colloquy with Mademoiselle Virginie. Before mid-day she had written and sent off a letter to

Madame Savoisy, with the important intelligence. One paragraph ran thus: —

“Now that the danger is passed, I may own the uneasiness I have lately felt. It was impossible not to think that Madame de Beaupré was coquetting cruelly with Raymond, and I feared he was taking play for earnest. Now there is an end to all nonsense; and if he has been a little scorched, it will serve to put him on his guard for the future against the flattery of great ladies. He reminded me constantly of a poor stupid moth, which never will allow itself to be saved.”

Not one word of kindness for Raymond in the whole letter, and yet Christian would undoubtedly have risked her life for Raymond. She would have nursed him through plague or fever, and been glad to do so; but at the moment she wrote that last remark, she hoped and wished that Raymond should be punished — mortified by this marriage. She would have been glad to have had some one at hand to whom she could have safely descanted on his wilful folly and stupidity. She was in that mood when women enjoy saying hard things of the man who interests them.

Before she went to bed that night, Miss Christian Power had been set right as to Madame de Beaupré's intentions. Very sincerely did Christian regret her confidences to Madame Savoisy; there was no saying what the consequences might be when Raymond's mother

came to know that Madame de Beaupré was not going to marry the Duc de C— G—. She must undeceive Madame Savoisy at once. The more she shrank from the possibility of Raymond becoming acquainted with what she had written, the more it appeared to her in the light of a duty speedily to enlighten Madame Savoisy. She dared not hope that his mother would not write a warning letter to her son. And what would Raymond think? He could not help knowing that Christian Power was his accuser. She would appear to him in the light of a spy. She must write; but she would tell Raymond herself what she had done; she would give him frankly her opinion; let him quarrel with her, if he pleased, but he should not have it to say that she was underhand.

If Miss Power were convinced that there was going to be no marriage, it was more than the town was. It would not believe in any denial; it was too preposterous for belief that even such a childish half-crazy creature as Madame de Beaupré would be silly enough to refuse the Duc de C— G— and his immense fortune. When disbelief of such folly became impossible, society shook its head sadly and angrily. Society always imputes evil to those who do not follow the beaten track. Madame Chuquet, being one of those pious people who always suppose the worst, said, "there could be no proper motives for such a refusal; if there were any good reason, why didn't Madame de Beaupré

give it. Whenever our actions required explanation, it was certain they must be blameable."

Madame de Beaupré had never troubled herself as to what people might say of her. "So that they do not say it to me, what does it matter?" she asked. Up to this time she had been equally indifferent as to who sought or who neglected her. In spite of society's disapprobation of her conduct, her salon was as much crowded as ever. All save one of her acquaintances appeared there with praiseworthy regularity.

Raymond Savoisy alone held aloof, although he also had come to the knowledge that the Duc de C—G— had been refused. The mere fact of his Grace having proposed had demonstrated to the young officer more clearly than ever the wide distance between his position in life and that of Madame de Beaupré. In aid of the warnings of his own good sense, he shortly received, as Christian Power expected, a letter from his mother — eight pages of maternal advice and admonition.

His answer did not cover a half-sheet of paper. He wrote, "Yes, frankly, I love Madame de Beaupré. I love her with my whole being. She has the whole first-fruits of my heart. I do not ask from what source you have derived your false impression of her; I beg you not to tell me. Young, lovely, impulsive, generous, tender-hearted, her foibles are those of her age; she has the defects probably of her virtues. Such as she

is, if the world were better than it is, she would only excite goodwill. Between liveliness, even volatility if you will, together with a girlish fondness for amusement, and lightness of conduct, there lies a whole world. Madame de Beaupré has never 'coquetted' with me, as you accuse her of having done. My eyes and my heart are alone answerable for what you, perhaps justly, call my folly.

"I shall avoid Madame de Beaupré's society, and I shall seek to be exchanged into another regiment. I ask of you, as a proof of mother's love, to abstain from any further discussion of this subject. Let me bear my pain in peace."

This was, however, more than Madame Savois could grant. She held it to be her duty to make Raymond sensible that there was another and far more important cause why he should not have fallen in love with Madame de Beaupré than the difference of worldly station. Rank and fortune were as naught in the balance against the difference of creeds. To overlook the first was folly, to forget the latter, culpable. She adjured him, by his duty to his God and to his parents, to renounce the society of the Vicomtesse. In short, she wrote everything that a warm-tempered, conscientious, rigid Calvinist would write to a son who confessed to loving a Catholic woman. No Jewish mother was ever possessed by a greater horror of a Moabitish

daughter-in-law than was Madame Savoisy for a Catholic one.

That second letter was a false move — it was too violent, too intolerant — it set vibrating certain chords in Raymond's soul which had hitherto been silent. It is a painful epoch in our lives when some one whom we have regarded as superior to the run of mankind, suddenly drops down to the general standard. Our affection remains the same — for the errors or weaknesses of a friend may trouble our minds without destroying our sentiments — but confidence and reverence are shaken. Involuntarily Raymond felt that his mother's words were those of a partisan, of a Calvinist rather than of a Christian. No Roman bigot could be more dogmatic, nor limit more narrowly the circle of salvation.

Nor had Raymond needed his mother's severe exposition of his case to make him perceive the line of demarcation between him and Madame de Beaupré. He had seen his folly, but cherished it as better than the worldly wisdom of others. He had dreamed, as young enthusiasts dream, of never giving expression to his love — of a fidelity that asked for no reward. By forcing him to take the defensive, Madame Savoisy had developed what had been passive into active. Dikes and opposition serve sometimes to augment instead of conjuring the danger.

For some few days after she had despatched her refusal of M. de C— G—, it was a delight to see Madame de Beaupré. She looked like one who had entered into the possession of a great happiness; but this did not last long — there was a reaction; from gay and equable she became restless and irritable. That peculiar limpidity of the eyes which imparted such youthfulness to her face had given place to a fever-heated look; the smoothness of her forehead was ruffled by a contraction of the eyebrows that testified to the tyranny of some fixed and painful idea.

She gave a large soirée, to which Raymond was invited, but did not come.

The absence of her manner, and the way her eyes turned constantly towards the door of the salon, were signs not overlooked by her guests. Even when you have nothing to hide, you will not escape suspicion in the provinces. Men and women in the provinces have plenty of leisure, and small resources of any kind to occupy that leisure. They either let their minds go to sleep altogether, or they become a species of amateur detective.

Many of those who were at Madame de Beaupré's soirée had no other interest in being there or elsewhere, except to act the spy on their neighbour's doings. To such, the raising or the lowering of an eyelid, the fall of a fan, gave motives for conjecture or interpretation. There were persons in Magny le Sec who would sit

silent through a whole evening's entertainment not to lose the chance of overhearing what others said.

This evening the penetration of at least a dozen of Madame de Beaupré's guests was actively on service to guess why their hostess looked so ill and disturbed. It could not have to do with the Duc de C— G—, that was certain. Heads had been counted, and none of the usual *habitués* were wanting. At last there was a glimmer of light. The Commandant was heard asking the English governess how it happened that Savoisy was absent. No, it was *not* possible! it was *not* within the limits of probability that a woman who could have married a Duke could care two straws for a sous-lieutenant. "Cupid is no respecter of ranks," said an old adept of life.

Twenty, nay, fifty times, Madame de Beaupré had to declare that she felt indisposed, in answer to harassing questions. When at last the weary evening was over, and the last guest had departed, she turned to Miss Power and asked, "Has M. Savoisy left Magny le Sec?"

"No, Madame."

"Do you ever see him?"

"No, Madame."

"Have you quarrelled?" This last question was accompanied by a forced laugh.

"No, Madame."

“Oh! Mademoiselle, do answer something else than a perpetual No.”

“What else can I answer, Madame? M. Savoisy has not left Magny. I have not seen him, nor have I quarrelled with him.” There was a ring in Christian’s voice which proved that her mood was not just then the most pacific.

“Why has he so suddenly given up coming here?”

“I really cannot tell, Madame,” and Christian’s pale face flushed furiously.

Madame de Beaupré fixed on the speaker a long inquiring look; then said, “Pardon me, Mademoiselle, if I do not quite credit that assurance, but I do not wish to force your confidence.”

Christian felt that she might have retorted, “That neither did she give credit to that assurance.”

Madame de Beaupré was the weaker in this little encounter; she was the more in the dark of the two as to the cause of Raymond’s withdrawal. After a pause she began again, “I only care to know that I have not offended him. I am afraid I was rather rude the last time he called: I contradicted him merely for the sake of contradicting. It would be silly to take offence for such a trifle; for I believe no one will deny that — that M. Savoisy has had no real reason to complain of my civility.”

The last few words were uttered with an assumption of haughty indifference.

Christian remained silent.

"Pray don't let me detain you, Mademoiselle. Good night. The party was a failure; didn't you think so?"

"I thought people seemed as gay as usual, Madame. Good night, Madame."

They separated with a very decided hostile feeling to one another.

"Why did I ever come here!" exclaimed poor Christian; "and why did I ever speak of that horrid little dog's accident? Who could have dreamed it would bring so much trouble to us all?"

"Make haste, Justine," said Madame de Beaupré; "I am so tired, I could cry."

She almost tore off her ornaments, throwing her wreath on the ground.

"There — roll up my hair — anyhow. Now go."

It was an inexpressible comfort to be alone. Her head was burning; her body like ice.

Why did she feel as she did—so thoroughly miserable, such an aching void? Why did her heart tremble with fear? Why did she feel that she had lost all that was worth living for? What had she lost? Had she not everything that she had ever possessed?

CHAPTER XIII.

At Last.

EIGHT days went by without even a chance meeting between Raymond and Madame de Beaupré. That this should be so, in a small town like Magny le Sec, when the lady made a point of driving or walking through the streets every afternoon, proved a very acute sight and an undoubted predetermination on the part of the gentleman.

Madame de Beaupré understood that Raymond was wilfully avoiding her, but something in her own heart told her this avoidance proceeded neither from dislike nor anger. She went further. She believed that she could guess the real motive of his conduct.

"Ah! stupid, stupid man! as if she were blind and could not distinguish between the real and the sham — as if she could class together Gustave Godard and Raymond Savois — as if she could suspect *him* of any meanness." And hereupon a succession of wild resolutions passed through her head — resolutions that kept her in a state between laughing and crying. "She was so sure all would *come right*," but to one so impulsive there could be nothing more fretting than 'waiting.'"

At last she decided that she had found a solution of the difficulty. If he continued obstinate, she would get a vicious horse and make it run away with her, on one of the days he was out drilling the soldiers. He should save *her* life, a very different affair from saving that of a dog, and then how could he help himself, she should be glad to know.

Luckily for the safety of her little person, hazard or destiny decided that they should come to an understanding without her having recourse to such an heroic measure.

About three leagues from Magny le Sec stands a magnificent château. Where once Emperors, Princes, and the greatest names of France were guests of the noble Châtelaine, now a couple of retired Paris shopkeepers display their newly-acquired splendour. Monsieur Delbecque, ex-perfumer, is a thoroughly inoffensive man. That baptiser of celebrities Gustave Godard, calls him the "Golden mediocrity." Had the nickname come to Madame Delbecque's ears, she would have asked "Who in their senses ever coupled gold and mediocrity together." Madame Delbecque, a severe-looking, taciturn woman, considers gold as the *summum bonum*, and having that, she feels assured of her superiority, and shows that she does so.

On the occasion of her first dinner to the neighbourhood, she kept her company waiting from seven to eight o'clock, excusing herself by saying that it

had taken "her women" that time to adorn her with her diamonds. From that moment she has been familiarly known in Magny as Aline Reine de Golconde.

Madame Delbecque was a sturdy Protestant, a native of Nismes, and a descendant of a Huguenot family in which there had been martyrs. She was acquainted by reputation with Pasteur Savoisy, and having seen Raymond at the Reformed Church, and ascertained who he was, she had forthwith invited him to the château.

Now the Chance which plays a part in our lives decreed that Raymond should accept an invitation to the Delbecques on the same day that Madame de Beaupré took a whim to go and pay the Reine de Golconde a morning visit. Nothing surely could appear more fortuitous than this visit. Five minutes before she ordered the carriage, Madame de Beaupré had not remembered the existence of the Delbecques.

It was a fact of notoriety that Madame Delbecque was never ready to receive visitors. It had therefore become a rule for callers to walk in the park or go to the green-houses till the lady of the château had made herself, according to her own expression, "fit to be seen."

Ushered, as she expected, into an empty salon, the Vicomtesse said to the regal-looking footman, "Call

me when Madame is ready, I am going into the grounds," and away she went.

She knew the place well, and turned at once out of the main alley into one of the pleasant side walks, cool and dark as the fretted aisles of a cathedral. She had not sauntered half its length when she saw before her a gentleman with a gun on his shoulder walking pretty fast. She did not doubt for half a second that it was Raymond Savoisy. She called out "Monsieur Savoisy!" but he could not have heard, for he suddenly diverged to the right — into some thick under-wood.

Without giving herself time to think, she quickened her pace, until at last it became a run. When she reached the point where she thought Raymond had disappeared, she went bravely and rashly into the thicket, tearing her muslin dress at every step, and growing more obstinate as difficulties increased.

But she was unaccustomed to running, or to battling with brushwood, and at last, as might have been expected, a root caught her foot, and down she fell, uttering a piercing scream. Raymond was so quickly by her side, that it is lawful to suppose he had never been more than a yard distant.

The moment she saw him she burst into reproaches.

"It's all your fault, M. Savoisy. I have sprained

my ankle, torn my dress, and scratched all my hands. Look!"

"Allow me to assist you, Madame."

"No; I can't get up—it *was* your fault."

"Do try and rise," he said, anxiously.

"Why do you wish to avoid me? for I am sure now that you saw me, and ran away. Did you not? I won't move till you say yes, or no."

"I will answer everything you can ask, if you will only allow me to help you to one of the seats in the walk; pray, pray remember, we may be seen here."

"And what does it matter if we are? I am hurt, and it is all your fault."

"Dear Madame de Beaupré, I implore of you——"

"I don't believe I can move."

"Will you permit me to assist you?"

"No; you are too—— odd."

She had hurt, though not actually sprained her ankle. She rose to her feet with the greatest difficulty, but she would not touch his outstretched hand.

"You cannot walk without help," he said; "in such a case you would not refuse the arm of even a lackey."

"You are not a lackey, but you are a gentleman who forgets what is due to a lady." She was in such a tumult of agitation, she did not really know what she was saying.

"Good God, Madame! how have I deserved such an accusation?"

"It's no use talking," she said. "My foot hurts me horribly. I must take your arm, but it's only necessity makes me do so."

She made three steps, then she burst into tears. He took her up as he would have done her child Berthe, and carried her to the nearest seat.

"May I leave you to go and bring a chair to carry you to the house."

"No, you shall not leave me. I will know why you have given up coming to see me, why you avoid me so carefully; for you *do* avoid me, or you would not have gone into that horrid brushwood."

There was a silence in which they were sure the beating of their hearts could be heard. At last Raymond said in a low clear voice, —

"I have avoided you, because I love you."

It was come at last; she had got possession of what she had been hoping, longing for.

Her reply was not immediate; then it came in a broken whisper.

"A strange proof," and half turning her face towards him he saw it flushed and tears clear as dew-drops on the cheeks.

"It *is* a proof, the greatest and best I could give you. Had I acted otherwise, you would have a right to accuse me as you did just now."

"Are you married?"

He laughed.

"I have never loved nor even imagined I loved any woman but you. I know now that I loved you from the very first moment I saw you. One evening you gave me your hand; you did so carelessly, but it made my heart like to burst, as now."

He hid his face in his hands, murmuring incoherent words that sounded like exclamations of pain and grief.

Madame de Beaupré had lost all her presence of mind, she was as shamefaced as a young girl.

At last Raymond said again in a husky, low voice —

"I have avoided you, because I love you."

She quivered, as if in mortal fear.

Raymond went on, letting her see his agitated face —

"I love you, I shall always love you. I am all yours, heart, soul, body, my whole being!" He threw himself on his knees by her side, laying her hands on his lips, his eyes, his burning forehead. "Do you believe me?"

"I believe you!" she could scarcely articulate.

"I need that you should believe me; believe that I am all yours now and for ever; far or near, it will be the same thing. I never meant to tell you."

"Why not?" she asked, in the same low, trembling voice.

"Of what use? There are impossibilities; but I am glad you should know. I think it will do you good to be sure there are such things in the world as constancy and faith; I would die for you. I wish I could; I wish I might die this instant — thus;" and he laid his head against her knees.

"Naughty, naughty!" In the struggle to smile she burst into a fit of hysterical crying.

"Hear me out. Don't say a kind word to me," and his eyes flashed out two large bitter tears. "I have done what I ought not to have done. I ought not to have loved you. I ought not to have told you; but the strongest heart breaks down sometimes. Do not reproach me; I suffer so much."

"Why should you suffer? It is all a mistake." The poor little woman imagined he alluded to her fortune and rank as causes of separation. "I never did care for what people said; and if you don't like me to be rich, I can make myself poor."

The tenderness and generosity of her heart, reflected in her face, made it at that moment more the face of an angel than of a woman.

In a transport of love, gratitude, and admiration, he caught her in his arms, and held her to his breast.

"I love you so entirely," he said, "that I would

accept the sacrifice; but, my sweet heart, there is something that separates us more fatally than difference of fortune or rank, — it is that you are Catholic, my darling, and I am Protestant.”

“But Protestants and Catholics intermarry. We are both Christians. You might have been a Jew and I a Mahometan; that would never have done!”

He looked sadly at her.

“Yes, you and I view the matter in one light. My mother and father will do so in another. No hope of their consent.”

Madame de Beaupré turned deadly pale.

“And you will give me up?” Her voice shook in spite of her effort to steady it.

“I have heard them say, they would rather see any of us dead than married to a Catholic.”

“That is dreadful!”

“Don’t turn away from me,” he said; and there was a break like a sob in his voice.

With a movement as impetuously innocent as that of a child, she put her arms round his neck, and whispered, —

“You must not be unhappy; I can bear anything but that. I am brave.”

The strong young man wept like a baby. He snatched her to his breast, kissed eyes, forehead, lips, calling her by every endearing name, — names that the full heart finds in such moments. He told her —

not in set phrase that can be written down — he told her in words, broken and confused by all the love and rage which can agitate a man who sees happiness before him, and dares not grasp it, — he told her he would be faithful to her as the most faithful husband could be; that never would he call another woman wife, — never, never!

At this crisis a tall solemn footman appeared at the other end of the alley.

“Send him away! don’t let him see me! Tell him to bring a glass of water! — anything! Say I am ill!” exclaimed Madame de Beaupré, with the presence of mind of her sex.

Raymond obeyed mechanically. Perhaps the excessive heat from which this French Jeames was suffering might have obscured his powers of observation, and prevented his remarking the young officer’s disturbed face. At any rate, he went for the glass of water.

“Promise one thing,” said Madame de Beaupré, when he rejoined her. “Promise that you will not avoid me; promise that you will come and see me. I have so much to say. I will be so good, if you will promise.”

“I will do what you please,” he answered, exhausted.

“And you will go home with me now?”

“I am invited to dinner.”

"Then I will stay. It's so strange. I can't feel unhappy yet."

The man with the powdered head and gilt buttons again appeared in sight, with a glass of water on a large silver salver.

"I have hurt my foot," said Madame de Beaupré to the solemn footman. "Will you give me your arm, Monsieur Savoisy?"

Raymond had no idea how much pain she really suffered. Not one exclamation did she utter; she was what she had said, "brave."

They found Madame Delbecque under arms, — that is, in a splendid new suit sent from Paris. Cap, dress, ornaments, her very chignon, only just unpacked.

The Mechlin lace of her cap must have cost more than the Curé of her parish received as stipend.

Madame Delbecque having read or heard that quietness or reserve of manner were bon ton, had kept the information in her heart. She walked (in company) as if her limbs were tied together, and would remain, on principle, silent for five minutes at a time.

On this occasion she was more than usually taciturn: so much so, that Madame de Beaupré said, playfully, "I hope nothing painful has happened."

"Thank you, Madame la Vicomtesse. Everything is as usual; we have no reason to complain of Providence. Monsieur Delbecque tells me the grapes are

abundant and excellent;" a slight bow accompanied every second word.

"And Monsieur Delbecque's red ribbon?" asked Madame de Beaupré, less from mischief than from a new kind of nervousness or excitement which drove her to speak of the first thing that came uppermost to her mind.

"Thank you, Madame la Vicomtesse. We are still expecting it. We have a friend staying with us, Madame la Vicomtesse; quite one that will suit you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Madame de Beaupré. The Comtesse de Castro. She has a voice. Monsieur Delbecque says Pasta is nothing to her."

"Who is Pasta? You mean Patti, don't you?"

Madame Delbecque committed herself to no reply. She said, "My husband has heard all the opera-singers, and he is of opinion the Comtesse de Castro is beyond them all."

"You don't mean to keep this paragon all to yourself, I hope, Madame Delbecque? Have you seen or heard her, M. Savoisy?"

In spite of her long habit of society, Madame de Beaupré blushed as she addressed Raymond.

"M. Savoisy will do both, I hope, to-day," said Madame Delbecque.

"And you won't ask me to stay also?"

Madame Delbecque was a little confused by this

sudden demand. She was not sure whether to accept it as a proof of equality or of condescension.

Madame de Beaupré cut the matter short by adding, "You cannot refuse me unless, by staying, I should make the thirteenth at dinner."

"We have only Madame Dubois, and the President of the Tribunal, and Madame St. Etienne."

"That makes seven, counting you and M. Delbecque, and the Comtesse, and M. Savoisy."

"Also our Deputy."

"Who does not know 'Partant pour la Syrie' from the 'Marseillaise?' He makes eight: any more? Then I make nine, the number of the muses. Exactly Brillat Savarin's recommendation."

Just then, the rich Delbecque himself appeared leading in the wonderful Comtesse, Spanish from top to toe, large eyes and small feet.

At the first glimpse Madame de Castro appeared young; at the second, she decidedly belonged to the class of "uncertains."

The Comtesse Juanita met Madame de Beaupré with a winning smile.

"I have been coaxing Madame Delbecque to ask me to dine here to-day. I do so want to stay," said Madame de Beaupré to Monsieur Delbecque.

"Madame, I go down on my knees to ask you."

"Don't, don't, Monsieur Delbecque, pray! I accept

without that ceremony. It would terrify me to see *you* in that position."

Seeing her eyes wander towards Raymond, the ex-perfumer felt called on to explain to her that the young officer was invited to the Château solely because he and Madame Delbecque thought it proper — being, as they were, Protestants — to show respect to the son of a Protestant pastor.

"M. Raymond Savois is one of *my* set," replied Madame de Beaupré haughtily, and forthwith went and seated herself by Raymond. She began the conversation by inquiring, "if he did not think M. Delbecque's portrait a great resemblance?" The picture was a daub and a caricature.

"You flatter me, Madame," bowed the original.

"Oh! no, indeed, M. Delbecque; it really is horribly like."

Raymond gave her a little glance of reproach, which enchanted her. It proved that he considered he had authority over her; a right to censure, which he meant to exercise. When M. Delbecque had moved away, she said, —

"I am going to be good and quiet for the rest of the evening, but remember you are to drive home with me."

"Not *tête-à-tête*," he said, with decision.

"I'll find some kind of dragon."

It was only too evident that she had not realized

the difficulties, nay, impracticabilities of their situation. Never had he seen her with so bright a face; it was transfigured by inward joy whenever it turned towards him. And yet Madame Delbecque was obtuse enough to seek her in order to say as the ex-perfumer had done —

“I should not have invited M. Savoisy had I expected to have had you Madame la Vicomtesse and the Comtesse.”

“You think we are too light-headed and silly for a man of sense.”

The Princesse de Golconde was completely puzzled, and observed “she must go and dress.”

“Pray do, chère Madame, and look, it is already six o’clock. I hope you won’t put on your diamonds to-day; you can show them to Madame de Castro in their cases; they look best so, I assure you.”

It was only the pretty, petting, infantine tone that saved Madame Delbecque from perceiving Madame de Beaupré’s sauciness. Luckily Raymond was at the other end of the room.

As Madame Delbecque sacrificed the diamonds, putting on only a reef of coral, dinner could be served at a little after seven. A Countess having precedence of a Vicomtesse, Madame de Beaupré escaped Monsieur Delbecque’s arm, and was consigned instead to that of the President.

“Let us go as far as possible from the great folks,”

said the designing little woman, taking a place at table next Raymond, coolly displacing the card which assigned it to Madame Dubois-Oudin. In vain Monsieur and Madame Delbecque remonstrated; she laughingly defended and kept her position.

As for Raymond, he was both happy and miserable. She made a series of playful, teasing attacks upon him, that were so many revelations, and he felt that the shrewd eyes of Madame Dubois-Oudin were upon them, and that that lady's silence was clearly a calculation to catch what was said.

The President, who in love affairs saw no further than he was meant to see, interrupted one of Madame de Beaupré's skirmishes by asking her "what she thought of the Spanish lady."

"I am afraid of her; she has all sorts of rages — a rage for science, a rage for music, for drawing, for travelling, for reading, for friendship, for solitude — suppose she were to bite me?"

"How savage we are," laughed the President; "are we jealous?"

"She has fine eyes, but they drawl too much; besides, she has all kinds of mysterious maladies; when a woman takes to ill-health, she has given up hope. Listen to her, is she sinning from ignorance or not?"

Madame de Castro was beseeching, in gentlest tones, that the gorgeous nosegay in the centre of the table might be sent away.

"I assure you," she added, "that I adore perfumes. I have a perfect rage for them, but never could so much as enter a perfumer's shop; scents bring on my oppression; that's the reason I had to give up Arabic: I had a *bijou* of a young professor, but he was so perfumed."

"Wouldn't the barbarian sacrifice his essences to you?" asked Madame de Beaupré.

"Ah, pauvre homme, he would have done anything for me; but what could he do? His linen was impregnated with those Oriental seeds and that attar of roses with which all Arabs perfume their robes; the case was hopeless. Pity the misfortune of my organization."

"I do with all my heart," said Madame de Beaupré, in a tone that made every one smile.

After dinner, which did not terminate till nearly ten, the Comtesse disappeared, and poor Madame Delbecque had to announce that the exotics had given Madame de Castro so overpowering a *migraine* that she had been forced to go to bed.

"She is an old friend of yours?" inquired Madame Dubois-Oudin.

"We met her last year at Ems; it was there we heard her sing."

"Oh!" was the comprehensive answer.

It then occurred to everyone that they had a long drive before them.

Madame Dubois-Oudin had come with the President and his wife, and intended to return with them. To her surprise, Madame de Beaupré pressed her to accept a seat in her carriage. "To be frank with you, Madame Dubois, I want you to chaperone me; if you will kindly do so, I can spare Monsieur Savoisy a walk in the rain — for it is pouring."

Madame Dubois agreed, flattered at this advance from the Vicomtesse, who had hitherto always fought shy of her.

That drive was a memorable one for Raymond Savoisy and Madame de Beaupré.

At first the two ladies entered into conversation, but it gradually ceased, and presently the chaperone's head began to sway from side to side.

Raymond had taken the seat opposite to hers. Was it out of respect to that lady's slumbers that he was so silent, or was it that he dared not speak, lest his voice should betray the fulness of his heart.

Madame de Beaupré was also silent: she was steeped in all the inexplicable happiness that is bestowed by the presence of one who is beloved. There was no moon, no light but the dim uncertain glimmer given by the carriage-lamps; yet, whenever her eyes turned towards Raymond, she felt that his eyes were on her. She could have gone to the world's end thus.

It was with a shock that she recognized they were rolling over the stones of the streets of Magny le Sec.

In five minutes more they stopped at Madame Dubois-Oudin's door.

"Good-night, chère Madame. Ah! M. Savoisy, you should not have got out in the rain."

"I shall not encroach further on Madame de Beaupré's goodness," said Raymond, stiffly.

"Do let me set you down, M. Savoisy," cried Madame de Beaupré. "You have not even an umbrella."

"Thank you, Madame, it is but a step. I have the honour to present you my homage."

"M. Savoisy!"

"Madame!" he approached the carriage door.

"To-morrow — quite sure;" she said in a low voice, putting her hand into his.

"At your orders, Madame," he said aloud.

Madame Dubois-Oudin had kept the street door ajar till she had seen the termination of the interview.

She fancied that the young officer looked unusually white, as he turned away from the carriage; there was certainly something between those two people. What?

Madame Dubois-Oudin sighed noisily.

"*Nothing good, nothing good, I fear.*"

That "*I fear*" stood for "*I hope.*" In a country town, one is so thankful for some excitement. Murder and arson are welcome; in their absence one can put up with a shocking scandal.

CHAPTER XIV.

Sight hateful! Sight tormenting.

WHEN Madame de Beaupré opened her lovely eyes the next morning, she felt that the world had changed for her — that she had parted from her old life; she could never return to what had been.

The fever of her spirits had subsided, and it was with an inner trembling that she awaited Raymond's visit. There were people in the world, it seemed, for whom there was something higher than wealth and position — people who sought to make no compromises or arrangements with heaven. Even that type of honour, her cousin d'Esbryat, had given precedence to the Duc de C— G—'s rank and fortune; his other qualifications as a pretender to her hand, his talents, manners, virtues, had found mention in a post scriptum.

As the day advanced, so did the agitation of her thoughts augment, and the more vividly did she recall what Raymond had said about his father and mother. It is to be remarked, as a trait of manners and morals, that not for an instant did Madame de Beaupré contemplate the possibility of Raymond's acting without the consent of his parents. Few men or women in France can bring themselves to have recourse to the

"trois sommations respectueuses" which are obligatory at all ages when the paternal consent cannot be obtained. The "trois sommations" weigh in the balance against those who have recourse to them, pretty much the same as our runaway or clandestine marriages.

Poor Madame de Beaupré's thoughts ran round in a weary circle.

At last M. Savoisy was announced. Scarcely waiting for the servant to close the door, she ran up to him, putting both hands into his, with, "You are so late."

"I have been writing to my mother."

He had entered the room looking sad and grave, but he was not long proof against the radiant contentment beaming from her face. Every gesture — every motion of her figure was a revelation of her inward joy. They were young, they loved, what wonder if hope gained the ascendancy?

"I will promise never to try to convert you. It's more likely you will turn me into a heretic, and then time — time does all sorts of wonderful things: it changes everything and everybody. Let us be a little happy to-day, till we are sure we must be unhappy." That was what the little lady said, and forthwith they fell to comparing notes as to all they had thought and felt from the very first day of their meeting. Hadn't it appeared to him as if he had always known her?

Exactly. Ah! it was wonderful how similar had been all their sensations and feelings.

"I did not know — I could not have imagined you were so good," exclaimed the lover.

"I was not good at all before I knew you — before I began to care whether you frowned or smiled, Monsieur."

Then Raymond craved for an explanation of how so lovely, so ethereal, so elegant a lady could care for such a rough clumsy soldier? "Was it really and really true?"

"Contrast, you know. Contradiction, perhaps. I can't tell; there are mysteries in creation we are told — but really — and really — oh! that will do."

And the sun shone brightly, and a gentle breeze came through the open windows, a zephyr laden with the perfume of the jessamine of Mademoiselle Virginie's bower. They had forgotten everything but that they were together, and that they loved. Every now and then small peals of laughter, like a chime of little silver bells, met the ear of Mademoiselle Virginie, who was in the summer-house not twenty yards from the open windows of Madame de Beaupré's salon. Mademoiselle Virginie stepped on tiptoe, and peeping in saw Raymond with one of Madame de Beaupré's hands in his; she saw his fine eyes fixed with a look of unmistakeable love and admiration on the fairy creature so close to him that her shoulder rested against his.

Poor Mademoiselle Virginie! what a terrible envy filled her breast. Never, never to have had the like experience! and yet, she was sure she was more worthy of a man's devotion than that light-headed, diminutive mortal. It would not have been Virginie that would have laughed in such circumstances. Mademoiselle Virginie wished, in the same words as Desdemona, of whom she had never heard, "that heaven had made her such a man."

She kept her watch as Satan did of our first parents, until she saw Raymond rise from his chair.

"Will you not stay dinner?" pleaded Madame de Beaupré.

"No, I must do what I can to prevent idle gossip."

"You cannot prevent it, if you were twenty times as prudent as you are. The best way is not to mind what people say. No one attaches any importance to what I do or say."

She saw his eyes darken into something very like displeasure, and she added, "I told you I was not good, but I am going to begin to be so. I shall not wear any more of those dresses, you know," nodding her head, "nor I won't laugh at people to their faces or behind their backs. I won't read *those* novels either; there, I promise not to be foolish, and you are going to promise — say it after me — 'Thérèse, I promise *never* to be angry with you, nor to misunderstand you, because though I know you are silly, I know also you

are not actually bad.' Oh, Raymond! I should break my heart if you were ever to think ill of me."

If he did not repeat the formula she had set him, he said something that satisfied her as well, for she was all blushes, and smiles, and happy tearfulness when at last she allowed him to go. He went, but under a solemn engagement to come back the next day.

That same evening Madame de Beaupré received a note in pencil from Mademoiselle Virginie:

"Could Madame de Beaupré grant her a private interview? It was of importance."

With a little disquiet as to what Mademoiselle Virginie could have to communicate, Madame de Beaupré sent back an affirmative answer.

Mademoiselle Virginie appeared in one of her most striking costumes — two long thick black curls, pendant from her chignon, a transparent white corsage, and a broad sash tied behind. In fact, dressed like a girl of eighteen.

After the first compliments had been said, and inquiries after the health of the two families had been made, Madame de Beaupré, impatient to know what had brought Mademoiselle Virginie, asked —

"I hope it is nothing disagreeable you have to tell me?"

Mademoiselle Virginie threw herself on her knees before Madame de Beaupré, and said —

"You can help me, if you will."

"Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle, what can be the matter?" asked the surprised and rather frightened little Vicomtesse.

"I am wretched — the most miserable of creatures — my sisters refuse their assistance. Madame de Beaupré, help me to get married."

"Willingly; but how, Mademoiselle Virginie?"

Madame de Beaupré suspected the poor spinster had quite lost her senses, and moved nearer the bell.

"You will keep secret what I am about to impart to you."

"Certainly."

"There are several persons who are not averse to me, there's Monsieur Oscar Godard for one."

"Really; has he ever said anything to you?"

"Not exactly, but I know when men admire me, they put their right hand under their left elbow, and lean their heads on their left hand — the side of the heart, you know — thus," and Mademoiselle Virginie, still on her knees, took the attitude she had described.

"Now, Madame de Beaupré, Monsieur Oscar always contemplates me thus."

"Pray, Mademoiselle Virginie, rise from your knees, you can talk to me much better sitting in a comfortable chair." And Madame de Beaupré forced the poor lady to get up.

"There are others. I see them at church."

"What do you wish me to do, Mademoiselle Virginie?"

"Speak to Monsieur Oscar. I have a *dot* of a hundred thousand francs, in rents upon the State. I must inherit all that my sisters have. You can say that I shall make a devoted, loving, obedient wife, and I really shall. I shall take the greatest care to avoid giving him any cause for jealousy. If I had been as wise once as I am now, you would never have been Madame de Beaupré. Anatole adored *me*."

"Poor Mademoiselle Virginie," said Madame de Beaupré, involuntarily.

"That was why he was so late in marrying, poor fellow — he never was happy — it was the death of him at last; not your fault, my dear, but poor Virginie's."

"I am very sorry" . . . began the Vicomtesse.

"That's all done and over now — the question is not to make the same mistake again. Will you speak to the Substitute?"

"It would be better if Madame de Tremereus would do so. Allow me to talk the matter over with your sisters."

"On no account." Virginie's eyes gazed angrily on the Vicomtesse. "I told you before that would spoil all. They are always contriving to prevent my marrying."

"I will do all I can for you, Mademoiselle Virginie,"

said Madame de Beaupré, anxious to get rid of her visitor quietly.

"If you do, I vow an eternal gratitude to you. You are the best friend I ever had. How do you like my dress? I'll tell you a secret, I never wear flannel; that shows I am still young. Some people are old at twenty — my sisters were — others are young at thirty. If you have got a bonnet lately from Paris, lend it to me, dear. What suits you will suit me — our complexions are the same."

To spare the poor foolish woman Justine's quizzing, Madame de Beaupré went herself to fetch the bonnet. When she returned, Mademoiselle Virginie was standing before the mirror, coquetting with her reflection. She had drawn one of the curtains to obtain a favourable light. She was giving way to one of her monologues.

"And I shall wear white — certainly — a wreath. I have a right — widows cannot — so much the worse for her. I wonder men can bear widows — all for her money."

Madame de Beaupré was thunderstruck. There was not a doubt Virginie was alluding to Raymond.

She said sharply, "Who are you talking about, Mademoiselle Virginie?"

"Pardon me, I did not speak. Oh! what a love of a bonnet. You are the kindest of persons to let me see it."

“As it pleases you so much, do me the favour to accept of it. I have never worn it.”

“You are the most delightful — the best woman in the world. Let us be great friends. I will call you Thérèse, and you shall call me Virginie, and we will tell one another all our secrets. Oh! I know something.”

“I am very glad you like the bonnet,” said Thérèse, skilfully pioneering her visitor to the door. “It will do for the fête of the 15th.”

“You sweet lovely creature, I adore you — don’t be afraid. I shall not tell,” and away skipped Mademoiselle Virginie, as if she had been sixteen instead of forty-six.

If the gift had been prompted by the hope of bribing Mademoiselle Virginie, it was of no use. “The bonnet will put everything else out of her crazy head,” thought Madame de Beaupré; but we are always wrong when we calculate on what silly people will or will not do.

Raymond came the next day, and the next after that. “Come,” said Madame de Beaupré, “until you get your letter from Castelnauudary let me have what happiness I can. I have had so little.” They spent the greater part of each of these days together, as forgetful of the outer world as though they had been children of six years old.

No wonder Christian Power asked herself if it were

possible this was the same reasonable Raymond she had known. She forgave him, but she detested Madame de Beaupré, as the cause of his "falling away from his high estate." If we are to believe feminine logic, men are wax in the hands of women. The lovers told each other every event of their lives. Thérèse (she could scarcely hear herself called Madame de Beaupré with patience,) had given him quite a history of her girlhood — a tragical history enough. She had never known her father. He had been found dead in one of the new streets in the outskirts of Paris — shot through the head — his hat pressed over his face — his arms straightened — his walking stick broken in two, but not robbed. Some said it was a suicide — some said an act of vengeance; some few called it a vulgar murder. She had no recollection of her mother, having been sent to the Convent of the Visitandines at four years old, leaving it at seventeen to marry M. de Beaupré, whom she had only seen twice before her wedding-day. She had known no family ties. She had been handed over to a husband by guardians as a piece of goods they were glad to get rid of, and did not care what became of.

"I have known what it is to be unhappy, Raymond," she ended, "and I can assure you it did not make me good. All this won't make you love me less." He understood that she could not bring herself to reveal to him the whole of her thought. If it were

possible, the knowledge of how her early youth had been thrown away, redoubled his tenderness for her. There was no egotism in Raymond.

His story was very different. It was a mere chronicle of home affections and domestic joys. He had never been separated from his parents until the day he put on a soldier's uniform. Every word he uttered carried conviction to her mind that it was no common bond of affection which united him and his family. She had begun to love him (as is most common in similar cases) without any particular reason, which some philosophers say is the only true way of loving; but now all the loose particles of that love was resolving itself into a very solid attachment, as she discerned in all he said such goodness and truth. The tender way he spoke of his mother attracted her more than all the rest — it made her say, with eyes running over, "How good you are. Oh! how good you are!"

He was contented to hear her say so, without seeking for any explanation.

There was only one person of whom Raymond and Thérèse were chary of speaking, that was Christian Power. She, because she had that extra sense peculiarly woman's which discovers a rival through all disguises; he, because he feared he might unguardedly let fall that Christian had written, and not in praise, of Madame de Beaupré.

Before the end of the third day since that decisive explanatory meeting at the Château of the Princess de Golconde, the town began to trouble itself about those long daily visits of M. Savoisy to the Vicomtesse.

As is easy to suppose, Madame de Beaupré had forgotten Mademoiselle Virginie's commission; and Mademoiselle Virginie, disgusted with this failure of friendship, had confided right and left the tender scene she had witnessed in the little salon.

The story spread like wildfire. Only the accused were ignorant that their secret was betrayed. The two elder Ladies de Tremereus headed the congress held on this subject. To hear the various suppositions and surmises put forth, was to come to the conclusion that the members of the assembly were all gifted with second sight, that is to say, second sight of evil. The very angel of benevolence must have fled affrighted from such an atmosphere.

The burden of all that was said, was, that Madame de Beaupré ought to know better. Women were such geese — that young man was only thinking of her fortune — anybody with eyes might have seen that all the advances were on her side.

Mademoiselle Solanges de Tremereus was able to affirm, on the words of their maid Victoire, that "he and the lady" were always *tête-à-tête*, neither the governess nor the child were ever present. The child would

not have been a great restraint, and it would have given a better look to things.

Something ought to be done; no one certainly had a right to interfere; but evil should be reproved whether in high or low station.

In many towns of France there is a "Society" or "Sisterhood" known as the *Mères Chrétiennes*. They have their special chapel in the churches; have their special religious services, to which only the members are admitted. On these occasions, papers called "Recommendations" are read aloud. The "Recommendations" embrace a wide circle of topics. Sometimes they call on Providence to give a son or brother a situation in a bank, or a husband some advancement; sometimes it is a pious outpouring against the extravagant smoking or dancing or love of poetry in some near and dear relative.

While Raymond and Thérèse were still in that happy land where all the hues are those of Paradise, a meeting of the *Mères Chrétiennes* was convened in the parish church, and one of the most learned "Recommendations" ever listened to, was read aloud by l'Abbé Poulot. The theme was "The Necessity of Prudence in Women who have lost the Protection of a Husband." The names of St. Jerome and his beloved daughter Ste. Paule, St. Augustin, Ste. Monica, the ladies Leta, Melanie, Furea, hurtled against the ears of the amazed Christian mothers like a well-sustained fire of musketry.

The peroration ran thus: — "To use the words of St. François de Sales, 'a widow ought to be among wives and young girls what the violet is among flowers. The violet has a sweet perfume, it hides itself under large leaves, its colour is modest, it is to be found only in shady retired spots, it is the symbol of gentle devotion, of humility, of the dejection of the solitary and tranquil life which best becomes a widow.'"

A short, pithy "Recommendation" followed on this long one. It was a prayer of three lines, that "if a widow cannot resist entering on a second marriage, it might be one conformable to her social position."

Some said that the first could not be the production of one of the mothers, it was too learned. At this Madame Chuquet smiled significantly. On which one of Madame Chuquet's friends observed that, probably the Abbé Poulot had intercalated some of his learning, which Madame Chuquet indignantly repudiated. It would be a disgrace to the society if any man, and he not a father into the bargain, should meddle with the "Recommendations."

The piece of laconic advice was attributed to Madame Dubois-Oudin.

The "Recommendations" would have been considered failures by the believers in "special interposition" had they not reached the ears of her for whose benefit they had been made. The only question was,

how the knowledge could be communicated to Madame de Beaupré. It was a doubting in Providence to have any fear but that the d—d good-natured friend would be forthcoming.

CHAPTER XV.

No!

Not one letter, but several, came to Raymond from Castelnaudary. His father wrote; so did his mother; so did Salome, who happened at that moment to be at home. They had not taken much time for deliberation. There had been scant hesitation in dealing the death-blow to his happiness.

M. Savoisy wrote with the most compassion. There was a phrase in his letter that betrayed something like a struggle between the "father" and the "pastor." "Being the minister of a church," he said, "he was accountable to that church; he was bound to make all sacrifices to prove his faith in the doctrines he preached; that the yielding to the weakness of one of his children might be a ruinous precedent for his flock," &c.; for these reasons alone, without taking into account others more personal, he was bound to refuse his consent.

His mother and sister were more vehement. Women are in all things more passionate than men. Madame Savoisy could not hide the personal dislike she had conceived for Madame de Beaupré. Independently of her being a Catholic, her rank, her fortune, her habits all rendered her most unfit for a wife to a man of Ray-

mond's class. It was one of Madame Savois's articles of faith that goodness and riches could not exist together. For her, the world was divided into goats and sheep: the former were the wealthy, the latter the poor. She admired the poor, invested them with all the virtues, giving all the vices to the rich. For her, Madame de Beaupré was, by her birth and wealth, condemned.

Salome, for whom Raymond had sacrificed so much, was very fluent about backsliders and idolaters. She declared she would rather he were unhappy all his life, than happy at the cost of marrying a Catholic: "That's my feeling, dear Raymond, and I am persuaded it is a right one."

And he, who had been unable to witness *her* grief! who had given up for her sake a profession he loved for one distasteful to him; who had, according to the world's opinion, derogated!

Madame de Beaupré bore the shock bravely. She showed neither pride nor resentment; she put herself on one side to think only of him. Her tender assurances, her caresses, her offers of self-immolation, drove him half wild with love and grief.

"We have been very happy this last week," she said; "why should there be any change? Your family will not exact that you should give up seeing me."

"Thérèse, don't you know that the stake is not equal between us — that a woman is destroyed by what is passed over as a joke in a man? If I had fifty lives

to give in your defence, I could not silence malignant tongues."

"But why care about them, if we do no harm?"

"You don't understand, my dear one. I *cannot* look on you as a friend. It might have been different, had I never told you that I loved you, or if I did not know that you loved me. I have blood, not water, in my veins."

"Suppose I don't care so much for you after all?"

He shook his head.

"And you really mean that you will not come to see me any more, that we are to be as if we were strangers! but I can't, Raymond, it's of no use to speak of it. The first thing I think of in the morning, the last thought I have at night, is you. What could I do with myself? I only want to see you, Raymond," — and she looked up at him as colourless as the whitest marble, cheeks and lips white, and hands that clasped and unclasped again with nervous spasms. He took her in his arms and held her close, his head bent down on hers. What was that which trickled so hot over her cheeks? "Raymond, Raymond, don't cry; I will bear it all, don't cry, don't cry," and she kissed his hands, and stroked his face, and tried to smile. Poor young things! what pain they suffered, how hard they struggled against their love, how hard they struggled to do what they held as duty!

Ah! religion, religion, what strange sacrifices are exacted in thy name!

Raymond was whispering in her ear — “I vow to you the same fidelity as if I were your husband — I am yours, soul and body.”

“You will never forget me, Raymond — never — never?”

“The day I do so will be my last. You do love me, my darling? Give me one of these long curls.” He had wound one round his finger.

She broke from his arm, ran to her work-basket, and in an instant had shorn off a handful of her beautiful hair. “Oh, stay, stay!” cried Raymond.

“What does it matter now? Do you think I care? Will you have my picture? I have only one; it was done when I was in the convent; it isn’t Madame de Beaupré — it is little Thérèse, poor little Thérèse. Come and see it.” She led him into a small room between the salon and dining-room, and there, arm in arm, they stood contemplating the likeness of a young girl of fourteen, dressed in the costume of a novice of the Visitandines — white cap and tippet, a black stuff dress, with wide sleeves. The arms were crossed, and the hands hidden in the sleeves, according to the habit of nuns. Nothing quainter and prettier than the sweet bright face, and the demure attitude, so in contrast to the laughing eyes.

“Will you have it, and always keep it?”

He bowed his head.

"I will send it to you. I had better have a case made, for travelling, and that people may not see." She talked fast; she was dreading he would say farewell.

He said, "Yes," scarcely knowing to what.

"Suppose we go to the wood, just to say good-bye to it," she said eagerly.

"It is too late."

"Stay dinner, just this once; only this once — for the last time."

"As you please, my poor darling."

He felt as if all his strength were gone.

This respite threw Madame de Beaupré into wild spirits; you would have supposed her under the influence of some great joy; it seemed so at first to Miss Power, but before the end of dinner she understood that Raymond's sadness and the Vicomtesse's excitement were merely different expressions of the same feeling.

After dinner was over, Miss Power was at a loss what to do. Nothing more disagreeable than to feel yourself one too many, and to believe that propriety commands you to give your unwished-for company.

As it often happens, however, what Madame de Beaupré had considered a trouble, proved a benefit in disguise.

Victoire had informed the "ladies" that the young

officer had been all day with Madame de Beaupré. In a sudden attack of indignation, the eldest of the sisters resolved to go and catch the culprit, and overwhelm them with confusion. Even Christian was momentarily sorry for the Vicomtesse when the lugubrious-looking Mademoiselle de Tremereus entered the salon, and sat herself down with a solemn face on the sofa, fixing her eyes full of scorn, first on Madame de Beaupré, and then on Raymond.

Ten o'clock struck; eleven, half-past, and still there was Mademoiselle de Tremereus, though everyone knew that her hour for going to bed was half-past ten.

Once at least, in a life, every human being goes through what Madame de Beaupré suffered during those two mortal hours. Everyone has at some time or other to put on a mask, that the indifferent or the malignant may not see a heart's agony. Everyone has to talk lightly, to hide fears or sorrows that are making the brow burn, the hands like ice. Madame de Beaupré's harsh, abrupt voice, so unlike her usual bird-like tones, her little nervous cough, made Raymond wince and quiver as if they had been so many stabs.

The old woman was pitiless. Her heart hardened as she sat gazing at the widow of Anatole de Beaupré. *She* had had her unknown pain. In that withered bosom early love still lived, and in this moment it

would have been hard to decide whether the jealousy of a rival, or jealousy that the dear dead should have a rival, was what most agitated it. Mademoiselle de Tremereus was taking a sip of that beverage, which, sweet at first, leaves so bitter a taste behind.

Christian was enduring her own slow torture. It is hard, terribly hard, to have to sit by and witness the love we covet, bestowed on another. Christian would have given her life to exchange suffering with Madame de Beaupré. "God help me!" muttered her poor heart, and yet to look at her, you would have envied her calm.

The great clock of Nôtre Dame clashed out midnight, and so still was it within and without, that the reply made by every clock in the town was audible.

Raymond, who had remained in submission to the pleading of Madame de Beaupré's eyes, felt the necessity of taking his leave. As soon as he rose, so did Mademoiselle de Tremereus.

In desperation Madame de Beaupré said, —

"Sans adieu, Monsieur Savois. I shall expect you to-morrow. At what hour can you come?"

"At your hour, Madame."

"Then I will say two o'clock. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly."

She gave him her hand; ice could not have been colder.

“May I also request the honour of an interview with you to-morrow, Madame de Beaupré?” asked Mademoiselle de Tremereus.

“Certainly, Mademoiselle; I will come to you either before or after I have seen M. Savoisy.”

“Before, if you please, before.”

“At eleven, then, I will go to you,” said Madame de Beaupré.

“Your arm, if you please, sir,” said Mademoiselle de Tremereus, and carried off Raymond as a prey won by her skill.

Christian woke suddenly with a start, not knowing what had awakened her, and in the dim, uncertain light of breaking day, saw a white figure, so slight, it looked a fairy, standing by her bed.

“Have I frightened you?” asked Madame de Beaupré, in a soft voice. “I have not been able to sleep. I have come to you as his friend. Pray don’t look so cold. I am sorely in need of kindness. I have never been unkind to you, have I? I think I could love you, if you would let me; but lately you have been like a glacier to me.”

Christian knew this was true. She was a woman, and not an angel; impossible to caress the hand that was robbing her of her treasure. All she could bring herself to say, was —

"In what way can such an insignificant person as I am, be of use to you, Madame?"

"You know, at least you must guess——" Madame de Beaupré changed the phrase. "You are so unfriendly because you do not think me good enough for him. I don't think I am; but he loves me — poor silly woman as I am, he loves me with all his great heart, and I——"

Emotion cut short the avowal that was making every nerve in Christian's body vibrate and ache.

"What is it you want of me?" she said, in a hopeless forlorn way.

Madame de Beaupré sat down on the bed, and leaning forward, kissed the governess's unwilling lips, hard as stone, hardened by inward strife and anguish.

"You will help me for *his* sake, you are the only person in the world who can. I will tell you everything."

And then her hands clasping Christian's, she told the simple story of their love, of the refusal of M. and Madame Savois to consent to their marriage.

"They are right," said Christian, and started at the harshness of her own voice. It smote on her conscience, accusing her of want of generosity, and of what pained her more, of meanness. It was a mean love that shrank from sacrifice. She turned her head on the pillow away from Madame de Beaupré, paused a little, then said —

"Tell me what you wish me to do?"

Madame de Beaupré told her project, and though Christian disapproved it openly, and said such things only succeeded in fiction, she ended by agreeing to do what she had been asked. Madame de Beaupré's elastic sanguine nature threw off its despondence at once. She left the governess with a heart full of renewed hope.

It was far otherwise with Christian. She was oppressed with doubts and fears. She had agreed to aid and abet what those for whose good opinion she most cared might designate a treachery to them; and she had done so not from pity or kindliness, but pride — woman's pride. Had she refused, could she have been sure that her refusal was not dictated by jealousy? She hated, — yes, she hated Madame de Beaupré, and that was the reason she had yielded.

Christian Power had had a hard life of it; she had known none of the joys of youth. She had now reached thirty years of age, and the future promised to be as barren as the past had been. Why should this be so? She had seen many others without fortune, with no greater personal attractions, with fewer mental gifts than were hers, become wives and mothers. What was there in her that kept her outside the circle of joys and sorrows in which other women moved? Was all that power of self-devotion, of self-sacrifice, of which she knew herself capable, never to be called into action for a

husband and children? Was she never to feel fond little arms encircle her neck, never to hear herself addressed by the tenderest and sweetest names in all languages, — wife and mother? Why was this so? Such an existence as hers could not be called living, it was vegetating. She would traverse life without leaving more trace of her passage than a boat leaves on the broad ocean.

As thus she meditated, the bright unsympathizing sun darted his first broad rays into the room. There's no accounting for the vagaries of memory. A scene of her childhood had risen up bodily before her. Her grandmother was laughing at her for her grief at the destruction of a favourite doll, and she heard now, as vividly as she had done some twenty years before, the weak cracked voice singing —

Begone dull care,
I prithee begone from me,
Begone dull care,
You and I can never agree.

Christian began to cry as a little child does. The tears came none too soon. The bow must bend or break.

It is curious how much the same we outwardly remain in spite of all the suffering we go through, in spite of our disappointments and disenchantments. People go about their affairs, mix with the world, dress in the fashion, eat, drink, talk, laugh, criticise, listen

to music, discuss the ballet, — and all without any heart left. Their heart died long ago, and they have to carry about a dead weight.

Persons in this plight are generally very chary of revealing the secret of what has happened to them. They are, as a rule, agreeable. Having no susceptibilities, you cannot offend them, nor hurt their feelings: they have none. But when you hear some one say to another in trouble, "This, too, will pass," you may make sure that you have discovered one of those with a dead heart.

No one would have discerned any external change in Miss Power when she joined Madame de Beaupré at breakfast. Her whole appearance was as trim and prim as it had been the day before, six months ago, or indeed as it was in those happier days when she was a member of the Savois family. Nevertheless, she had become one of those who will say to every sad soul, "This, too, will pass."

Madame de Beaupré, on the contrary, had an April face. She was full of hopes and fears. She handed Christian a note, saying, —

"Read it, oh! pray do; you cannot tell what a comfort it is to me to have some one to confide in, some one to whom I dare speak openly."

Christian took the offered paper; it was a note to Raymond, and ran thus, —

"I made you promise to come and see me to-day,

but when you receive this I shall be already far on my way to Paris. It is in our interest I go, and if I were to see you first I should tell you everything, and you might dissuade me, and take from me the hope that upholds me.

"I shall not write to you during my absence, and only in the event of some necessity must you write to me, and then Mademoiselle Power will forward your letter. Mademoiselle has my entire confidence. I look on her as my best friend.

"Good-bye; think of me as I think of you. Always your

"THÉRÈSE."

As Christian returned the note, Madame de Beau-pré said, —

"I do consider you my friend, and if you will let it be so, my home shall be always your home."

Christian had not yet reached the stage of courtesy which is one of the marks of her peculiar situation, so she answered, —

"My services do not merit your gratitude; they are given unwillingly."

"Why do you shut your heart against me? Do try and love me a little, just to make it more easy for me to be so very, very much obliged to you."

"You must make allowances for a very different

nature from your own, Madame de Beaupré. I am reserved and unable quickly to attach myself."

Madame de Beaupré said, sweetly, —

"I will trust, then, to time."

Mademoiselle de Tremereus waited in vain for Madame de Beaupré's visit. When Victoire was sent to inquire if the Vicomtesse had forgotten her appointment, she took back the startling intelligence that the Vicomtesse had gone away, and no one knew where; she had not even taken Justine with her.

"It was an indecent, mysterious proceeding; and, if not speedily explained, Madame de Beaupré would have no one but herself to blame for any injurious reports that might get abroad."

This was what Mademoiselle de Tremereus said to Madame Dubois-Oudin; and Madame Dubois-Oudin answered, —

"Mon Dieu! what fools women are!"

CHAPTER XVI.

In a Strange Land.

PASTEUR SAVOISY, his second son Didier, and his youngest child Lina, a girl between thirteen and fourteen, were waiting at the railway station of Castelnaudary the arrival of a stranger guest.

Eight days previous to this evening, the family Savoisy had been thrown into perturbation by a letter from Miss Power. Christian had written to beg them to receive for a few weeks an acquaintance of hers, a Mademoiselle de Morville, who, from peculiar circumstances, had become desirous of understanding what were the differences of dogma between the Roman Church and the Protestant.

This request did not seem strange or overweening to these unworldly people. The only obstacle that crossed their minds was that expressed by Madame Savoisy, who exclaimed, —

“What will the priests say to our having a Roman Catholic in our house?”

The Pasteur answered, —

“I will run the risk of all they can say or do. I count all cost as nothing, if I can win one soul from error.”

No better man, perhaps, ever lived than M. Savoisy, Pasteur of Castelnau-dary. His family held him to be faultless, — not even his friends would agree to his view of himself: "That he was a miserable sinner." But, superior as he was, he could not escape some taint of our common humanity. M. Savoisy had the passions, and was open to the temptations, which, from the beginning, have beset pious men. He would have had all mankind hold the doctrine he held, belong to the communion to which he belonged. For those of the Romish faith he had a special horror: he held them to be idolatrous in the literal sense of the term. Neither he nor any of his family ever entered a Roman Catholic church. He returned the courteous salutation with which the priests of the town greeted him; but he uttered under his breath, "*Vade retro Satanas.*" Mild as a dove on all ordinary occasions of provocation, let but a "Sœur" or "Frère" interfere in the slightest with a Protestant, and you would have heard him fierce and loud as any Boanerges.

To present the Pasteur with the chance of rescuing a fellow-creature from the gripe of the Scarlet Woman, was to offer him an irresistible bait. Many a trap had he fallen into. Vagabonds, pretending to seek for the truth, had oftentimes fared plentifully at his expense. No experience had ever made him cautious of such advances; no, not though some had asked him a price for their conversion.

Naturally, Miss Power's recommendation was sufficient guarantee for the honesty of Mademoiselle de Morville's intentions; it did honour, therefore, to the Pasteur's Christian forbearance that he listened patiently to his wife's further objections.

Madame Savoisy declared that there was something mysterious in such a demand, coming as it did just at this particular moment. On the whole, it would be better to send the lady to M. Verneuil or to M. Jacquart, both men of undoubted piety and knowledge, and more versed in controversy than M. Savoisy.

This was a hard blow; but the Pasteur received it with humility. He was, besides, not without experiences that, after having violently opposed any measure, Madame Savoisy's conscientiousness was apt to take the alarm, and caused her to modify, if not reverse, previous decisions.

During the day, Madame Savoisy propounded the question, this time of her own accord, —

"Why Christian Power had not been more explicit. She had never named this Mademoiselle de Morville in any of her letters?"

"My dear wife, Peter hearkened to the message of Cornelius without any questionings."

"Ay," retorted the lady, "but the messenger said that the centurion had been warned of an holy angel."

"All good inspirations may be considered warnings of an holy angel," said M. Savoisy.

"And then Christian says not a word of this person's habits or station. She may be a whimsical fine lady. You see her address is Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain. How are we to make a 'grande dame' comfortable?"

"Treat her as you do Salome or Pasteur Schmidt's wife. If she be occupied with serious subjects, a little more or less of luxury will not trouble her. And I have had occasion to remark that people of high station are often of a great simplicity. I daresay she will not have such a fine bonnet as Mademoiselle Beauvallon."

"Oh, papa!" cried Lina, "and you told me not to talk of people's dress."

"You are a good little girl to remember my advice," said the Pasteur, kissing her.

A letter in the affirmative was sent to Mademoiselle de Morville to her address in Paris.

It then became necessary to inform the congregation of the impending event.

The intercourse between the Pasteur and his flock was marked by much primitive simplicity. He was in truth their shepherd, equally careful and tender for all; acknowledging no difference between the richer and the poorer, except in requiring more from the former — more of long-suffering — more of sacrifice and of humility. You could have discerned no difference in the courtesy of his manner to M. Beauvallon, the rich ironmaster, or to Michel Buzelac, the stone-

breaker. He dined with the shoemaker as well as with M. Beauvallon. Claudine, the work-woman, sat at his table, and was in all ways treated as Mademoiselle Beauvallon; in short, M. Savoisy did come something near to the example set in the Gospel.

Women are more aristocratic by nature than men, and Madame Savoisy had never been able to reconcile herself to being shaken hands with by the unwashed of the Reformed Church of France. "It is even going against the custom of the country," she had pleaded.

"It is a sign of fellowship natural to those who feel themselves a minority set apart and looked down upon," was the reply.

"I am always willing enough to find fault with the Roman Catholics," returned Madame Savoisy, "but I cannot see that they persecute us at all."

"Then, my dear, accept the annoyance as a penance for want of humility. God is no respecter of persons."

Here the terrible child Lina interfered to say, —

"I think I have read somewhere in the Bible, 'Keep your hands clean,' and a great many of our people do not, papa."

"I will preach on the necessity of outward as well as inward cleanliness, my dear."

Another trial for Madame Savoisy was in the great interest the female members of the congregation took in her and her children. They could go nowhere, put

on nothing, that the excellent dames did not remark upon. The hairdresser's wife considered it right one day to report to Madame Savoisy the observations made on her wearing a straw instead of a velvet bonnet during the winter.

"It was not acting up to her duty as a Pastor's wife, not to have a black velvet bonnet at Christmas, as every other lady had."

Madame Savoisy knew what she had to expect when these tiresome well-intentioned people should be informed that they were about to have a Catholic in their house. The information was given from the pulpit at the Wednesday evening prayer meeting.

It had always been M. Savoisy's rule to let his congregation clearly understand his actions. He knew how limited, and yet how easily excited are the imaginations of the uninstructed, and that to sow doubts of the purity of ministers of the Gospel was one of Satan's commonest tricks.

Naturally, these explanations were occasionally attended by other drawbacks — that of wearying discussions, narrow-minded disputations, and not seldom an open censure of the course pursued by the Pastor. But all this was better than perpetual suspicion and misunderstandings.

The news of Mademoiselle de Morville's expected visit was received with a general rustle of emotion. Half-a-dozen men followed M. Savoisy into the vestry

to shake hands with him; one wished him joy — another hoped no harm would come to him — all were anxious to know when the lady would arrive, and the schoolmaster inquired if the church should be cleaned.

“It would be of little use, my friend, considering the national custom of spitting,” was the answer, which produced a chorus of “Good nights.”

Madame Savoisy could scarcely extricate herself from the women. She had to promise to see Madame Gaen, the hairdresser’s wife, and Madame Labiche, of the toy shop, next morning.

Madame Gaen was peculiarly alarmed lest any harm should accrue to Didier. “I am not for having young men and women in the same house — no, not though they were saints — weren’t the Roman Catholic confessors always far too fond of their penitents? She had always heard they were, though she thanked God she knew nothing about them.”

An involuntary thrill of apprehension ran through Madame Savoisy as she listened to this confused talk.

She said afterwards to her husband, “I fear we have been too precipitate in agreeing to receive this lady.”

M. Savoisy, in his well-known blue dressing-gown, the Christmas gift of his flock, was at that moment pacing up and down the room in the throes of com-

position. He was mentally gathering together those arguments which he afterwards published as a pamphlet, under the title of "Why I am not a Roman Catholic," and which won him some renown.

"Pooh, pooh!" he exclaimed, to a second expression of Madame Savois's alarms. "We know all that is necessary for us to know. It is my duty to answer any call for spiritual information. When I am about my duty, I have no occasion to act according to worldly prudence. Some one has said, 'Every man's task is his life-preserver.' As long as I am busy with my task there will be no danger for me or mine. So let me write, dear wife, and you make your preparations for our guest."

"I am sorry I must give her Raymond's room. The paper is all mildewed in Salome's."

"If it is disagreeable to you to use Raymond's room, put her into Lina's."

"No, I can't do that; it is too close to ours. Everything is vexatious to me about this visit. I never had such an unwillingness to see anyone as this Mademoiselle de Morville."

"That arises from this unfortunate affair of Raymond's."

"It is, you must allow it, a curious and disagreeable coincidence."

"I cannot see the coincidence, my dear."

"Men are always so blind," said Madame Savoisy, as she left the room.

And now the reader knows pretty much what passed in the interval between the reception of Christian Power's letter and the setting forth of M. Savoisy with his son and daughter to meet the evening Paris train, by which Mademoiselle de Morville had notified she should arrive.

Monsieur Savoisy having some acquaintance with the station-master, was permitted to wait on the platform. As the Pastor was one of those persons who remember to be kind in small things, he had asked this favour to spare his self-invited guest the feeling of being a stranger among strangers.

The Pastor was kept during half an hour in a state of great activity. The officials, to whom he was well known, were amused by seeing him, at the arrival of every train, run after every lady who had any appearance of youth. M. Savoisy had quite settled in his own mind that Mademoiselle de Morville was young, he even conjectured she would be pretty; he had a veritable turn for romance.

At last he made sure he had found the stray lamb; he pounced on a young lady looking both alarmed and bewildered.

He said, "I am Pasteur Savoisy. Are you Mademoiselle de Morville?"

"Oh, yes!" and she seized rather than accepted his offered arm.

"Have you much luggage?"

"Only one box."

"My son will see after it; we need not wait."

They passed through the *salle de bagages*."

"This is my second son, Didier," said the Pastor.

Mademoiselle de Morville looked at him with shy curiosity.

"And this is my youngest daughter, Caroline, always called Lina. Do you feel able for a walk? It is a good mile from here to our house."

"I shall be glad to walk," replied the stranger, holding fast by the Pastor's arm.

He thought he had never heard a more charming voice and accent. A lady of the court at least, was what he said to himself, as he marked that peculiar air of her whole person which as a rule belongs to persons of the higher classes.

Lina walked on the other side of Mademoiselle de Morville. The streets were almost empty, very few lights, and but just sufficient moonlight to give an idea of the quaint, quiet little town. There was not much said during the walk; indeed, a something about the stranger was beginning to alarm M. Savoisy. He could feel her trembling, and she breathed short and hard, like one in fear; these were signs of something beyond timidity.

The Savoisys lived in a large old house, close to what were once ramparts, and are now boulevards. The Pastor opened the front door with his latch-key; as he did so, Lina ran past him into her mother's room, saying in an excited whisper, —

“Oh, mamma, she is quite a beautiful, grand young lady; I am afraid of her!”

M. Savoisy led his guest through a dimly-lighted stone passage into a large salon, where Madame Savoisy, dressed in her number one gown and cap, was waiting to receive them. Now, nothing could be less encouraging in their appearance than the Pasteur's wife and her salon. First of all as a rule, our ordinary dress becomes us best, because in it we are less conscious of ourselves; then in a room that is seldom used, there is always a chilly atmosphere, no warm family breath has been there to thaw it, and the chairs and sofas are as unyielding as solitude can make them. Had the poor trembling traveller been ushered into “mamma's room” with its confusion of papa's writing-table, the great work-basket, fishing-rods and old guns, dolls and cradles; these last now serviceable for holding raiment to be given to those who needed to be clothed, the poor traveller would not have had the inward shuddering that shook her from head to foot when Madame Savoisy just touched her hand.

M. Savoisy's appearance always gave the idea, to poetic people at least, of a calm evening after a

troubled day; Madame Savois's, that of resignation, or of some constant regret suppressed.

Didier came in presently; he resembled Raymond much as a poplar resembles an oak. There was a constant gentle swaying of his head to-and-fro, a sort of deprecating movement, which his elder brother could not be said to possess.

Mademoiselle de Morville's eyes, so the mother at once observed, were often straying towards Didier.

After the first hard searching introductory chords of conversation had been struck, Madame Savois proposed to her guest that she should take off her bonnet and travelling mantle preparatory to sharing in their evening meal. Madame Savois then showed the way up the broad stone stairs with quaintly carved balustrades to Raymond's room, the guest-chamber for the time being, a room as spacious and lofty as the salon, directly above which it was.

The bed, almost as large as many bed-rooms in Paris, had dark green serge curtains; a few high-backed chairs were ranged against the spaces of wall left between tall carved presses; on a small table, under a glass globe, was a model of the amphitheatre of Nîmes carved in wood.

"This is very pretty," said Mademoiselle de Morville, standing by the model and examining it with smiling eyes.

"The work of a schoolboy," returned Madame

Savoisy, coldly, adding, — "Our bonne knows nothing of the duties of a lady's-maid, but I shall be happy to assist you."

"Thank you, I can do everything for myself."

"Then I will leave you. Lina shall come to call you when supper is ready."

Everyone had been struck by Mademoiselle de Morville's peculiar air of distinction. The Pastor and Didier were of Lina's opinion, that she was quite a beauty.

"She is pretty, nothing more," said Madame Savoisy.

"Glorious eyes!" exclaimed Didier.

"I wish you would not get such a habit of exaggeration," said his mother, pettishly.

"The glorious eyes" bore marks of having wept, when they appeared at the supper-table; and besides that, there was something so feminine and delicate about the new-comer, that the Pastor's heart softened towards her, as towards a child.

Nothing more simple than the fare and the table arrangements. No table-cloth, which would seem strange to English people; but there were table-napkins. Tell the French that these last were rarities in England before the last quarter of a century, and they wonder how we managed, and evidently think us pigs. And we, on our side, lift up hands and eyes at the sight of soup served on oil-cloth!

After supper they returned to the salon, and Lina having brought a small table, and placed it before her father, fetched a folio Bible and put it on the table; then, as if it were a necessary part of her office, she threw her arms round her father's neck, and hugged him till he was half suffocated.

Upon a sign from her mother, Lina presented a New Testament to Mademoiselle de Morville.

M. Savoisy, opening his Bible, said, —

“We shall begin our worship by continuing our reading from where we left off this morning — the third chapter of the first of Corinthians.”

“Find the place for our young friend,” added the Pasteur, perceiving that his guest was seeking helplessly to find the chapter indicated. It was indeed the first time Mademoiselle de Morville had ever had a New Testament in her hand.

After the reading they all kneeled down, and the Pasteur prayed aloud, adding to his usual intercessions for the family, a peculiar and touching petition for the stranger within his gates.

Lina, who, to be honest, was more occupied by the stranger than by the prayers, thought Mademoiselle Morville must be ill, for she could see the young lady was shaking from head to foot, as if with cold.

As soon as they had risen from their knees, Lina whispered to her mother, —

“I think something is the matter with her.”

Madame Savoisy then perceived how deadly pale Mademoiselle de Morville had become.

"You are tired; had you not better go to bed?"

A gasp, a sob, and the stranger fell on the floor at Madame Savoisy's feet, crying out, —

"Forgive me! forgive me! I am Madame de Beaupré!"

The Pasteur jumped up; so did Didier. Lina ran into a corner, and covered her face with her pinafore.

Madame Savoisy rose also, but stood as if she had been turned into stone.

Didier was the first to recover his presence of mind. He said, —

"Mother, lift her up."

But Madame Savoisy neither moved nor spoke.

"Madame de Beaupré, I beg of you to rise," said the Pasteur, seeking to unclasp her grasp of his wife's dress. But in vain.

"I meant to try and make you all love me first," stammered the poor Thérèse; "and I thought — I hoped, — but when I heard you pray for me, I could not go on deceiving you. I love him," dropped almost inaudibly from the quivering dry lips.

"Mother! mother! speak to her," urged Didier.

"May I inquire, Madame, if your plan met with my son's approbation?"

The tone of Madame Savoisy's voice brought a terrified look into Madame de Beaupré's face.

"No, no, no! He knew nothing. Oh, have mercy! do, have mercy! It's all my fault."

Out of the corner rushed Lina.

"Mamma, mamma! you *shall* forgive her! you *shall*, you *shall*!" and bursting into a paroxysm of loud crying, the girl flung her arms round Madame de Beaupré's neck.

"This is very dreadful, — all wrong together," said the Pasteur, sorely troubled and perplexed.

"Lina, my child, go directly to your own room. Didier, take her away. Marthe," he said to his wife in a decided voice, "help me to raise Madame de Beaupré. This position is unbefitting one mortal to another."

The husband and wife supported the Vicomtesse to a sofa.

"Give her a cushion."

As Madame Savoisie was placing it under her head, Thérèse turned and laid her cheek on Madame Savoisie's arm, saying, —

"I never knew what it was to have a mother."

Then she closed her eyes, and there was an unbroken silence. The Pasteur and his wife were studying the stranger's face.

"How fragile and young she is," thought M. Savoisie. "What a small, delicate figure!"

She had that peculiar air which belongs to the classes who enjoy the same immunities as the lilies of

the field. His own Lina looked more capable of going out into the world alone than this lady. His heart grew full of tenderness towards her, thinking how she had broken through all the barriers of her rank and sex for his poor souslieutenant's sake. He felt, too, a certain pride that Raymond should have gained the love of this beautiful fairy. Then the excellent Pasteur fell into a sort of reverie as to the part women play in men's lives, — the reverie of a large-hearted man.

"The best among us," thought he, "never come up to the self-sacrificing tenacious love of a woman;" and he recalled — for the Pasteur could not dwell on any subject without the Gospel story and example mingling with it — how Peter had denied, the other disciples held aloof, and how the Marys had been unshaken in their devotion and courage.

Madame Savoisy also studied the passive form of her son's love; but it was with neither tenderness nor pride. The jealousy of a mother was wringing her heart. Her soliloquy was this, —

"We bring a man-child into the world with mortal pain and sorrow; we nourish him with our strength; we tremble, we think, we plan, we wake for him; and then he meets some such pretty doll as this, and he forgets his mother; or if he remembers her, it is at intervals. She is no longer necessary to his happiness. He says, 'My wife wishes this, be so good as to do it;'

or, 'My wife's little finger aches, and I must give her all my thoughts.' "

Then Madame Savoisy, who in the main was a just woman, recollected that *her* husband had left *his* mother for her sake; and she excused her unfriendly feeling by adding, —

"If she were only worthy of him I could have given him up; but to fix his heart on a Catholic, and a woman of the world, — the trial is too hard."

Suddenly Thérèse opened her eyes, and fixing them intently on the husband and wife, said, "What will you do?"

"Let us leave all agitating discussions till to-morrow," began M. Savoisy. "We are all too much excited to have the full use of our reason. My dear young lady, for indeed you look very young, go to rest in the certainty that you are among friends — believe that we will do our best for you — I gave you a welcome as a stranger, now I welcome you as one in whom I take a fatherly interest."

His calm voice and look rebuked the waves of passion heaving the bosoms of the two women before him. The impulsive Thérèse seized his hand, exclaiming, "Oh! you are good, really good. I will obey you in all things. I will do nothing you tell me not to do."

The Pastor smiled kindly on her.

"Then I bid you make no rash promises, but go

to bed. Do not forget your prayers, asking sincerely for help and guidance from your Father in Heaven. Good night, poor pilgrim."

Madame Savoisy accompanied Madame de Beaupré to her bed-chamber.

"This bell, she said, "communicates with my room in case you should require anything. Allow me to assist you."

The assistance being declined, Madame Savoisy put out her hand. Thérèse took the hand, saying, "Will you kiss me?"

Madame Savoisy bent down and pressed her lips lightly on Madame de Beaupré's forehead.

Thérèse, during some of the last weeks, had often battled with slumber which sought to interrupt those delicious reveries in which one floats between pleasant memories and pleasant hopes. Now she closed her eyes, desirous that sleep might come and bring forgetfulness. All her bouyant self-reliance had vanished. She had the sensation of being in a strange country of which she knew not one word of the language. She felt utterly helpless — stricken with that panic which has turned brave soldiers into poltroons; she foresaw her defeat, and then Madame Savoisy impressed her with the idea of inaccessibility much as a high smooth-surfaced rock would have done. She had asked a kiss of Raymond's mother with a feeling akin to that which

makes an Arab try to partake of the bread and salt of some powerful enemy.

She passed the night in alternations of fear and expectation. Her head ached with vain efforts to argue her case: to imagine what her adversaries would say, and to concoct answers. It is terrible to pass hours and hours of darkness in this vain struggle with one besetting thought, turning and re-turning it, always to reach the same fatal conclusion.

CHAPTER XVII.

Parental Communings.

"OF all extremes," says a modern critic, "the most dangerous perhaps is that of excellence, at least it is the most difficult to correct. The culprit has a right to his own approbation, and none know in what way to reproach him. For instance, Cato! his misfortune was to know no measure in his virtues. His desire to be firmly consistent in his opinion made him deaf alike to the advice of friends and the counsels of experience. The practice of life, *la pratique de la vie*, that imperious mistress, to use Bossuet's words, had no hold upon him. His energy degenerated into obstinacy, and his probity into over scrupulousness."

Madame Savoisy's was one of these honest absolute natures. It was always "Nay" and "Yea" with her on all occasions. She ignored palliating or extenuating circumstances. She might be said to be incapable of balancing the two sides of a question. From the first moment of suspecting her son's admiration for Madame de Beaupré, her decision had been taken. She would never consent to his marriage with a Roman Catholic, let the consequences be what they might.

If she sat late into the night by the Pastor's side,

it was not to argue or to listen to arguments. It was to share her sorrow with him. Her countenance had lost that marble rigidity which had sent such a chill to Thérèse's heart. Tears gathered in her eyes, and were silently wiped away.

"My poor wife!" exclaimed M. Savoisy, more than once. They were sitting side by side, hand in hand, as they had done in many another trouble. From time to time, broken sentences dropped from their lips.

"Whatever happens, is by the will of God; we shall acknowledge some day with reverence that the present trial has been sent for some wise end," murmured the Pastor.

These were words of habit, which, no sooner pronounced, than he felt that they did not carry with them any balm. Suffering, even when we elect to suffer, is not to be conjured away by the strongest faith. It always has been and always will be difficult for mortals to achieve that state of feeling when the heart does not rebel against the lips which say, "Thy will be done."

M. Savoisy had had his share of the hardships of life, he had not escaped, more than the brightest examples of virtue of all times, from the poisoned tongue of calumny; he had known the anguish of seeing a beloved child in danger of death, but he had never endured before the bitter struggle between his faith and his affections. He must now testify to the truth of

what he had, so constantly preached, that the Protestant was the only True Church, that the Church of Rome was an idolatrous church, her priests false teachers, by crushing out all the joy of his first-born's young heart.

"Poor young things!" said the Pastor, and put his handkerchief to his eyes. She is a pretty, loving creature. It is a pity they chanced to meet. Very inscrutable are the ways of Providence, and all arising, too, from our interference about Christian Power."

"Yes, she is pretty, and she is young," said Madame Savois, "but not so young as not to know what she is about. She is not an inexperienced girl. She has been a wife. She is a mother. We have had descriptions enough of her mode of life, and of the persons surrounding her, to prove that she is no novice as to men's admiration. From the first she must have been aware of the disparity between her and Raymond. It was the instinct of the coquette which drew her to him — she felt that he resisted her. Yes, my boy did try to escape her toils."

The Pastor stroked his wife's hand as he always did when she was angry or excited, murmuring to himself, "What strange creatures women are." Then aloud, "By-the-by, what did Christian Power mean by aiding this lady to come to us under a false name?"

"Who can tell what were the arguments used? She has been over persuaded."

"Christian was not easy to persuade," returned the

Pastor, doubtfully. "It is a ravelled skein, and one we shall not unwind without breaking many a thread. My dear, I should like to look over Raymond's letters during these last six months; let us see that we have not carelessly overlooked signs of a growing evil."

Madame Savoisy took a packet of letters neatly folded and arranged according to date from her desk.

"Read them to me, my dear," said the Pastor. "Begin at the one in which he mentions meeting Christian Power."

In this letter Raymond gave a ludicrous account of what he called his mock heroic act, adding that he wished it had been some poor body's dog he had saved, instead of the pampered pet of a silly woman of the world.

For a couple of months afterwards there was no further mention of Madame de Beaupré in the young soldier's correspondence, though he wrote much of Christian, and expressed his satisfaction that she had at last found a pleasant situation.

"That says something in favour of Madame de Beaupré," observed the Pastor. "I remember now Christian herself writing that it was impossible not to love this lady."

"She added also, that it was equally impossible not to disapprove of her," rejoined Madame Savoisy.

"Well, well!" said the Pastor, "read on."

"In the letter announcing Raymond's promotion,

Madame de Beaupré was mentioned at length. There was a page at least full of admiration of her beauty, grace, and above all of her kindly manner to himself.

"And we read all this and never foresaw the possibility of danger," ejaculated the Pastor. "Though how could it have come into our heads that poor Raymond and this wealthy Vicomtesse could meet on equal terms."

"A princess might be proud to be loved by a man like Raymond," flamed up Madame Savois. "It is not every day his equal is to be met with, and certainly not among the young officials of a country town."

"The issue proves you are right, my dear; but it is a judgment after the fact has occurred. The pity is, that neither you nor I perceived what we now allow to have been a probability. Go on, Marthe, let us not shirk our share of blame."

Gradually Madame de Beaupré's name ceased to appear in the letters. But occasional slips from the heart to the pen might have warned the parents that the writer was under the influence of some new and strong emotion.

Raymond had never been given to anything like morbid feeling or to self-lamentation; he had taken his trials cheerfully; it ought therefore to have excited attention when he penned such phrases as, "There are moments when I forget reality; when the things of this

world pass before my waking eyes as if they were the phantoms of a dream." Again, "Sometimes, I envy those among my comrades who seem incapable of any but light and fleeting impressions. Perhaps such natures are the best suited for us mortals, who can hope only for short moments of happiness amid long years of suffering." Further on, he said, "Sometimes I ask myself if we are not born into the world subject to a peculiar destiny from which we have no power of escape. If so, of what use is it to struggle."

Then came the answer to that letter of Madame Savoisy's, begging Raymond to cultivate the "bons Poplus," and warning him against intimacies with those out of his sphere; the whole seasoned by covert blame of Madame de Beaupré.

The reply ran thus: —

"I do not know, nor wish to know, from whom you get your impressions of the lady you censure so severely. I will not hide from you — why should I? — that on a further acquaintance all my unfounded prejudices against that person have vanished. The most tender and generous heart in the world is sometimes carried away by a giddy little head; but the nature, perhaps excessive in all things, is good, undeniably good. It must be so, to have resisted a faulty education and the influence of her surroundings. Above all, she is perfectly natural and spontaneous; she does

not know what it is to do evil. I beg of you, dear mother, to spare your animadversions of one whom your son highly respects, and who is a stranger to you."

"My poor boy!" sighed the Pasteur.

"To think of Raymond being beguiled by a mere pretty butterfly," observed Madame Savoisy.

"Dear wife, I begin to perceive something very different from a butterfly in Madame de Beaupré. By the step she has taken in coming here, she has proved that neither rank nor fortune, nor the approbation of friends nor of the world, have weighed with her against Raymond — poor and undistinguished by birth or fame. She has humbled herself to us, when she might be pardoned for believing that she conferred honour on us. True love requires strength of heart: it is as rare as the four-leaved trefoil Lina hunts after so sedulously and so vainly. I wish almost that she *had* been a butterfly, our task would have been easier."

"Men judge women differently from what their own sex do. Madame de Beaupré's coming here seems to me unfeminine — more like the effect of caprice than of steady feeling. Raymond himself allows her to be giddy. I assure you that after this step of hers, even had she been a Protestant, it would have been difficult for me to reconcile myself to receiving her as Raymond's wife."

These were Madame Savois's last words that night.

It is now necessary to see what was saying and doing at Magny le Sec.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Magny le Sec on the Alert.

A WEEK had elapsed since Madame de Beaupré's departure, and that she was absent had begun to be forgotten, when one morning Victoire, the Demoiselles de Tremereus' lady's-maid and *quasi* confidant rushed into their presence with an unusual want of deference. She entered with outstretched hands.

"It's the end of the world! — fine news, indeed, Mesdemoiselles, fine news! Madame la Vicomtesse has got ——"

Victoire stopped and mopped her face with her handkerchief.

"Madame de Beaupré has got what?" said the three sisters together, in one shrill voice.

"Oh, ladies! I cannot, I dare not, speak. The whole town is full of it. You hear it in every corner of the streets. The gentlemen are all dying of laughing."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! what is the woman talking about?" cried Mademoiselle de Tremereus, violently excited.

"Victoire, will you be so obliging as to speak out

what you are dying to tell," said the second of the sisters, authoritatively.

"No, Mademoiselle, no one shall have it to say that I spread reports. Cart-horses shan't draw from me another word; but I advise Mesdemoiselles not to go out. They had better send for Madame Chuquet."

"You are a fool," observed Mademoiselle de Tremereus in a downright passion from balked curiosity. "I should like to see the man or woman in Magny le Sec who would venture to offend a de Tremereus. Go, and tell the Englishwoman to come and speak to me."

Victoire flounced out of the room, muttering, —

"It doesn't matter to me; it does not hurt me."

"I thought how it would end," said one.

"How?" asked another.

"Why couldn't she go and play her pranks in Paris where no one would have known or cared what she did. But here, under our very eyes, it is unpardonable," said the elder.

Miss Power made her appearance. Hitherto she had only seen "the ladies" after they had been under the hands of their "coiffeuse," and when they had attired themselves for receiving visitors. For an instant the governess doubted whether these three old women in short bedgowns, their grey hair all unkempt, could be the grand Mesdemoiselles de Tremereus. The pro-

verb only says that *beauty* unadorned is best. For elderly ladies, dress is of great avail."

"You have heard, no doubt, the scandal about Madame de Beaupré.

"Where is she?"

"What made her go away?"

These three questions were snapped at Miss Power like so many pistol shots.

Miss Power contented herself with replying to the first question. She had heard nothing about Madame de Beaupré.

"Very singular," said Mademoiselle de Tremereus, sternly.

("Virginie, my dear, do not believe her," said Mademoiselle Virginie, addressing herself.)

Mademoiselle Tremereus, taking no notice of her youngest sister's unconscious avowal, went on —

"Victoire has come in declaring that it is as public as if the town crier had proclaimed it."

"What is as public?" asked Miss Power.

"But you can tell us where Madame de Beaupré is?" said the second sister, shifting the ground of debate.

"And you are doubtless acquainted with the reason for this hurried journey," added Mademoiselle de Tremereus.

"If I were her I would be married even in my

bed," said Mademoiselle Virginie, speaking aloud her secret thought.

"Virginie, be quiet, you are too excited," warned her second sister.

"Madame de Beaupré went away on business. She desired that her letters should be forwarded to her notary in Paris. I have his address. You can write to Madame la Comtesse and make your inquiries of herself," said Miss Power.

"And you mean to tell us nothing more?"

"If Madame de Beaupré had placed any confidence in me, I should certainly not betray it."

"What? not if you were aware that her reputation was attacked?"

"When there is no foundation for scandal, it dies away of itself. Would you be so good as to inform me what is said about Madame de Beaupré's journey?"

"I always did hate the English," soliloquized Mademoiselle Virginie; "they are always as tall and as stiff as so many towers."

"If I had known, I should not have had to trouble you," said Mademoiselle de Tremereens. "It's something too bad for Victoire to tell us."

"Indecent, of course," muttered Mademoiselle Virginie.

"And you suppose I have more courage to shock your ears than Victoire. Oh, Mademoiselle, it is those

who give credence to an evil report, who invest it with life," retorted Christian.

"You forget, Mademoiselle Povère, that the same roof covers us and Madame de Beaupré. It is impossible for *us* single women to remain quiet under the supposition that light conduct has been going on within the very walls of the family house which shelters us. It's our duty to know particulars."

"This is like sudden madness (*un accès de folie*)," said Christian, "I will not stay to hear the person maligned whose bread I eat," and with a curtsey she turned and left the room.

"These Englishwomen! no manners!" exclaimed Mademoiselle de Tremereus.

There was no necessity for "the ladies" to go out to seek for information, it came to them.

Madame Chuquet first appeared.

"You have heard, of course? dreadful, is it not? They say all the servants and workwomen knew it weeks ago. She stayed to the last moment. It's enough to make M. de Beaupré get out of his grave."

"The Englishwoman denies it."

"Of course, she is a Protestant as well as the young man. For my part, I was always against her having that Englishwoman. There is no understanding those English; no expansiveness, always wanting privacy."

Madame Dubois-Oudin followed.

"She had suspected something after that drive home from the Delbecques. She had seen tears in the Vicomtesse's eyes when M. Savoisy refused to go home with her. When a man's rude to a woman, we all know what that means."

Visitors to Tremereus' house poured in all day. It seemed as if they really had expected the walls to speak. What one advanced as a conjecture, became in the mouth of the next a certainty. The tide of scandal rose higher and higher; the first words people said on meeting were, "Well, you have heard; what do you say?" and the answer was either a significant shrug, or a more significant laugh. There were even some who would give you to understand that "they could an' they would" tell you things of the *past* that would show you the *present* was nothing extraordinary.

At the Casino, a grey-headed man, who had often sat at Madame de Beaupré's table, told the story in words that seemed borrowed from the galleys. One or two prudent men slipped away to avoid being led into giving an opinion.

An austere lady pronounced her verdict, that, "Since women had allowed their husbands to give men's dinners and had themselves taken to sitting in the smoking-room, there was nothing astonishing in Madame de Beaupré's conduct."

One of the *Bande des folles* ventured a remark,

that, "Surely, Madame de Beaupré with her fortune, and able to do exactly as she pleased, would never have waited until concealment became impossible. She might have gone to Switzerland or Italy, and who the wiser?"

But this reasoning was scouted, as was the proof that there was a physical impossibility against the accusation being true, the acquaintance between the accused being too recent.

We know that there was just one philosopher in Magny le Sec: the man who lived in and with his books. The scandal penetrated even into his library. He laughed long and heartily.

"Let Madame de Beaupré come back," he said, "and I wager all I possess that there will be a procession to her house, and that those who have been the most venomous against her will be the first to appear in her salon."

Raymond Savoisy was the very last to hear the report against himself and the Vicomtesse. When it did reach him, he went at once to Christian Power, and insisted on knowing where Madame de Beaupré was. Christian lost all presence of mind at sight of his face. His eyes were like two burning coals: the bronze of his complexion had turned to a livid hue.

"If I could only discover the inventor of the lie!" he exclaimed; "but no: it seems to have sprung forth as the plague does from some hidden corruption and

dirt. Everybody repeats the foul accusation: they heard it here, there, everywhere; never was there more prudent villainy. It is 'Pooh, pooh, my dear sir! I never listen to scandal — never believe it — who does?' And all the time it is taking root. These cowardly defamers are as slippery as eels." He stopped an instant for breath, then said, "Now then, where is she?"

When he heard that Madame de Beaupré had gone to his father and mother — had taken the long journey alone, she so accustomed to be hedged in by all the observances of rank, he turned aside to hide the tears that welled up to his eyes.

"My poor darling, and they will have the heart to deny her, to say no: and they will call it religious consistency: she renounces fortune, rank, friends, because she loves me with her whole faithful heart, and they will tell me that because she has been taught from infancy to believe something more than we do, because she crosses herself and we do not, that it would be a sin that she should be my wife. I'll tell you what, Christian, it is enough to make a man forswear religion of any kind."

Christian resolutely put aside her own pain, as noble-hearted women do, to soothe Raymond's. What wonder, though, if there pierced through some of her words that which made her lot bitterest. She said, in

conclusion, "Your trial is hard, but it is not one which lays low a life; you love and are beloved in return."

"Yes, God bless her," he said, fervently, and a brightness spread itself over his face, and his eyes assumed the expression of one who contemplates a blissful vision.

Christian recalled him to reality by saying, "I am going to write to Madame de Beaupré."

He started. "What's the use of writing? Letters never fully explain a situation. I shall ask for a week's leave. If I am refused, *you* must go, Christian. Though they would ruin the happiness of their son, I believe my father and mother will have some regard for his honour. Tell them that it is said I now *refuse* to marry Madame de Beaupré. Oh, my God! and I can do nothing to punish the liars. If my parents hold out, I know what I have to do, and I promise you I shall not swerve from my determination."

As he was quitting the room without the semblance of a recollection of her existence, she asked, "Shall I see you again to-day?"

"Without doubt," and he was gone.

She smiled a bitter smile. "He reckons on me as he would do on his dog. Go here, go there,—not even a thank you. The journey was too hard for *her*: it's nothing for me. *She* would have been more polite given me kisses and sugared words to obtain her ends. On the whole I prefer a man's selfish brutality."

So mused poor Christian. She passed at this time through woman's bitterest hours. She seemed to herself to have lost all hold of life, as if she had no longer sound footing, or a place in the world. Duty, it was frightful to think of, nothing but arid duty during a long life. Duty without any recompense. It would have been of no avail to tell her at that moment that Time is a great soother, a great consoler; that sorrow, if it last longer than joy, still has a limit.

In the meantime Raymond had made his way to the Commandant's house, the same gentleman with whom Madame de Beaupré had been so angry because he would not at once promote Sergeant Savois.

Major D—, as soon as the sous-lieutenant had made known his request for a week's leave, guessed at the motive for the demand. Major D— was not a popular man; he was reserved, and had an irritable temper; the explanation for which was, that he was poor, and had a wife and two daughters. When, within a twelvemonth from this date, Major D— was appointed to a lucrative post, he became renowned for kindness, and was universally liked. The Major little thought at the moment that the good-nature he was showing to his young subaltern was to be the mainspring of the prosperity he had been seeking in vain up to his fiftieth year.

The moment he saw Raymond he held out his hand, saying, "You have come no doubt to speak of the infamous reports going the round of the town; I don't believe one syllable of them, except perhaps that of there being some mutual liking between you and the lady. No offence," he added, seeing Raymond's face flush. "I may say I have been a sort of confidant from the first. The dear woman came to me to insist on your being made an officer, and a towering passion she was in when I tried to explain that there were difficulties in the way. I am persuaded she had something to do with your promotion."

"Do you mean that Madame de Beaupré interested herself for my promotion?" asked the astonished Raymond. "At that time we were not acquainted."

"Without any doubt she interested herself. She is a true woman: what she wishes for, she will have — a charming, warm-hearted creature. I don't see what the devil any one has to do with meddling between you. If you care to have my advice, send in your application to the Minister of War for leave to marry. I will support you with all my power."

These were the first words of cordial interest Raymond had heard. His comrades had avoided all commentaries. Even Christian had seemed lukewarm, and he had such need of friendly sympathy. His heart was unlocked by the Major's frankness, and he at once confided to him all the obstacles arising from the

strict religious views of his parents, and their positive refusal to consent to a mixed marriage.

"You astonish me," said the Major. "I had supposed Protestants to be more liberal than ourselves."

"And then," continued Raymond, "her fortune adds to the difficulty. My father will say that, were he to consent, it would cause a double scandal, as both Protestant and Catholic would assert he had yielded from interested motives."

"My good fellow, of course you have learned 'La Fontaine's Fables?' Do you remember 'The Old Man, his Son, and the Ass?' And you have read history — an act accomplished is an act accepted."

Raymond agreed that the Major's advice was the best in the world, but the force of circumstances often rendered it difficult to follow the wisest counsel. He had come now to request the Major to give him a week's leave, that he might see what his personal influence could achieve with his parents. He ended by saying, "I will confide to you what is a secret; I only knew it myself this morning — Madame de Beaupré is at this moment with my family."

"Then the matter is as good as settled," said the Major, laughing. "She has a will of iron. Take your leave, and come back and triumph over all these scandal-mongers."

CHAPTER XIX.

Madame de Beaupré's Resolutions.

It is one thing to decide what we will do, and quite another to put our decision into execution. For instance, Monsieur and Madame Savoisie were irrevocably determined to refuse their consent to Raymond's marriage with a Catholic, and the Pastor had settled to make this determination clear to Madame de Beaupré the following day. But when she joined them at the breakfast table, they were all struck with pity not unmingled by compunction. Her face was colourless, the very lips were white, and, in spite of an evident effort at self-control, quivered ominously every time she attempted to speak.

"Do you think she is going to die, mamma?" whispered Lina, in great excitement.

"Don't be silly," was all that Madame Savoisie said; but her manner became almost motherly, almost caressing to her unwelcome guest.

"We must let her recover from the first shock of disappointment," was what the Pastor said.

Madame de Beaupré, feeling the change from the severity of the night before to the kindness and consideration of to-day, jumped to the conclusion that her

cause was gained. Under this impression, something of her natural self reappeared, — something of that wild, animated, romantic Thérèse who had won Raymond's heart. She was so evidently desirous to please them all, that every passing hour made them view with greater pain the impending explanation.

Then there was disunion in the camp. Lina had become like Madame de Beaupré's shadow. Didier, the very incarnation of a Huguenot, was full of admiration for the beautiful high-born lady, who had had eyes to discover, and heart to appreciate, Raymond's merit, and expressed such vivid regrets that they sounded very like arguments for a capitulation. That was all the support M. Savoisy found in the bosom of his own family.

The second day he decided to make known her sentence to Madame de Beaupré. She, lulled by a false security, had slept well, and when she appeared in the breakfast-room, it was with a smile that made them all feel as if a ray of sunshine had entered the room with her. She greeted the Pasteur and his wife with such a sweet, affectionate manner; she raised such loving eyes to them, that their words and looks involuntarily reflected hers. To have seen her seated at table, by the Pasteur's side, you would have supposed that she had always lived in the same simple style. She ate of the plain fare with the appetite of one who relished it.

M. Savoisy, during breakfast, proposed to her to go with him a walk into the country. Castelnaudary, like all the places in that part of France, has its traditions of religious conflicts, and the Pasteur imagined that he should find in such tales an introduction to the painful subject he had to discuss with her.

He left the house with the intention of making her understand that his resolution against a mixed marriage was inexorable.

They had scarcely set out when they were accosted by the Juge de Paix, who, at once, made evident his desire to be introduced to the lady with such a high-bred air to whom M. Savoisy was giving his arm. The Juge de Paix was a man famous in the town for his erudition, and in particular for his perfect knowledge of all that regarded the antiquities of the department. He was charmed by the stranger's beauty, piqued too by the something of mystery attending her arrival. There was no refusing his polite offer to be her Cicerone. The description he gave of gladiatorial fights, and of martyrs, was both historical and dramatical, but not theological. M. Savoisy had lost his opportunity.

In the meantime Madame Savoisy had been perusing a letter which had thrown her into the greatest perplexity. It was from the Poplus, to their relations in Castelnaudary; and these last being members of M.

Savoisy's congregation, had considered it their duty to put it under cover to the Pasteur's wife.

No wonder Madame Savoisy was in consternation. The Poplus had penned a very precise detail of all those scandalous reports about young Savoisy and Madame de Beaupré forming the staple of conversation at Magny le Sec. "Ce bon. Monsieur Poplus" was, in fact, angry at Raymond's not admiring his daughter; and his account might have served as a criminal indictment against the sous-lieutenant and the Vicomtesse.

Madame Savoisy's first impulse was to disbelieve every imputation; her faith in her son, and the impression made by Madame de Beaupré, inspired her with a moral certainty that the criminal accusations were odious fabrications.

Then came after thoughts. Madame de Beaupré's singular journey — her agitation — it was surely scarcely natural in a woman of her position to come in person to beg their consent. Why had she not allowed Raymond to do so first. The only excuse for such an extravagant proceeding was, that the scandal had some foundation.

Only those who require, as Madame Savoisy did, unblemished purity of action, can comprehend the anguish that pierced her heart when she had to contemplate the possibility that her son, hitherto the glory of her life, had been untrue to the principles he professed. Agitated by suspicions as she was, she could

not trust herself to meet Madame de Beaupré again; she shut herself up in her own room, desiring Lina to say, "that she was unable to appear" — neither more nor less.

The Pasteur had sought his wife immediately on his return from his unfruitful expedition. When he had taken cognizance of the contents of the Poplus letter, he said, —

"I must have Raymond's explanation of these matters, before I give credence to such stories. There has been enough of imprudence, no doubt; but if he confesses that one tittle of what is charged against him be true, the marriage will become a necessity."

"You will consent?" asked Madame Savoisy; "that will be giving a premium indeed to misconduct."

"Wait a little, Martha. I shall not consent, but I shall insist on his making use of the right he has legally to summon us to accord our consent."

"To be forced to have recourse to such a step will be a hard enough penance to one like Raymond. I am thankful now that I was unable to speak to Madame de Beaupré this afternoon. I was impatient of the Juge de Paix's interruption — another, among many proofs, that even in what are comparative trifles, how much more wisely things are ordered for us, than we would order them for ourselves."

Madame de Beaupré, taking it for granted that the non-appearance of her hostess was caused by indisposi-

tion, retired to her own room immediately after dinner, in order to leave M. Savoisy and Lina more at liberty. Lina had let her know that she was in what had formerly been Raymond's room, and she amused herself this evening with examining the contents of his old bookcase. His boyish handwriting on every blank leaf of his school-books — the school-boy doggerel on many a margin — the laughable portraits, no doubt, of professors — all were subjects of interest for her. As for any consecutive reading, that was beyond her at present; if she read, it was without knowing what she read.

When at eight o'clock Lina brought her a lamp, Madame de Beaupré expected to be invited, as she had been on the previous evening, to go down to evening prayers; but as no invitation of the kind was given, she took it for granted that her remaining in her room would be more convenient to the family. She therefore kissed Lina, and said she should go to bed early.

The night was stormy, thunder growled at a distance, and rain splashed against the windows of the room in which sat Monsieur and Madame Savoisy. They had at last settled on what they would write to Raymond. The letter was to be in Madame Savoisy's handwriting, but in the Pastor's name — a method adopted to show their entire agreement in the sentiments expressed. Madame Savoisy had just taken her seat at the writing-table, M. Savoisy had just begun to dictate,

when they were startled by a pebble thrown up against one of the windows.

"Raymond! it is his signal!" exclaimed the mother, opening the sash, and calling out "Raymond!"

"Let me in, mother," was the quick reply.

The Pastor ran to unbolt the front door, and in another minute the young man was in his mother's arms.

"You are dripping wet, my darling," she said, for the moment forgetful of all his real and supposed misdeeds. The sight of a beloved face is a great calmer of wrath.

"It is only my cloak that is wet," he said, throwing it aside.

Raymond was looking thin and ill — his eyes were dull and sunken — altogether as different as possible from the picture of health he had presented when he had been to see them the year before.

The worn, anxious face had a subtle influence on the mother's heart; her spirit was very willing, but her flesh began to wax weak.

"You are ill, Raymond!"

"I am perfectly well," he answered, impatiently, "but I am worried and anxious. How is Madame de Beaupré?"

"She is quite well," replied his father. "Calm yourself, my son; take some refreshment, and then we will discuss this business of yours."

"Thank you, sir, I am neither hungry nor thirsty. I could not swallow a morsel," he added, seeing his mother about to leave the room. "There can be but little to say between us, and the sooner it is said the better. I love Madame de Beaupré with my whole being — heart, thoughts, soul and body belong to her. I reverence as well as love her. She is pure and good as she is lovely and talented. She gives me love for love. She is ready to resign rank and fortune for me, ready to take her place by my side as a citizen's wife; to share the fate of a poor soldier. She has offended the world for my sake. She is assailed by all the contumely that prejudice and malice can invent. It has come to this, that in Magny le Sec it is said, and believed, that I — I, who adore the ground she treads on — draw back and will not marry her. In short, I have travelled night and day to implore her to return home as quickly as the railway can convey her, that her presence may put an end to at least one atrocious scandal. I have nothing more to say; spare me all arguments, and tell me, in the fewest words, your decision."

"Raymond, Raymond, why were you not wise in time; all this anguish and struggle would have been spared us had you watched over your heart, had you not allowed passion to overcome your reason."

"Mother, do you suppose I set about loving in cold blood. I loved before I knew it. Good God! to think that it is the mere difference of the form in which we

worship God, that is used as a plea to make the life-long misery of two human beings! Tell me your decision at once!"

"A moment, Raymond," interposed his father. "It is as you say useless to argue with you just now. But I am not only a father. I am a minister of the Gospel, and, as such, accountable to my church for any dereliction from the principles I teach. In one word, we will not consent to your marriage with a Roman Catholic."

"That, then, is your ultimatum — here is mine," said Raymond. "My presence in the same town with Madame de Beaupré is impossible, and for some time she must remain there. I shall apply at once to be exchanged into one of the regiments under orders for Mexico."

"Raymond, do you wish to kill me," cried his mother, throwing herself on his neck.

"Mother," he said, "you have required the sacrifice of my earthly happiness; well, I make it out of obedience to you and my father — but I owe a large debt of gratitude to Madame de Beaupré, not only for her dear love's sake, but for the very rank I hold — for my re-instatement in my former social position. It was she who, hearing my story from Christian Power, obtained my promotion before we had ever met. *She* did not stay to consider whether I was Protestant or Catholic. I owe much, very much to her — something to myself. I will not expose her nor myself to the

difficulties of a false position. It is for this reason, and not as a menace, that I repeat, 'I go to Mexico.'"

"You shall not — I command you on your obedience as a son to obey me," said Madame Savoisy, passionately.

"I am a man as well as a son," he replied; "I have made the greater, you must make the lesser sacrifice."

"There is no occasion for such extreme measures," said M. Savoisy. "We do not wish to quarrel with you; you are of the age which gives you a right to make use of the law framed in view of occasions of disagreement between parents and children. Make your *Sommations respectueuses*—that ends the difficulty."

"You are perfectly aware that I will never resort to such means. No. I abide by your decision. I will not even see Madame de Beaupré—I dare not—I will write to her. All I beg of you is to persuade her to return to Magny at once; poor woman! she has paid dearly for her imprudent, unselfish love." He turned away, and took up his cloak.

"You are not going away at this time of night, Raymond, and in this weather," exclaimed his mother.

"Indeed I am. I am your true son. I have inherited your tenacity of purpose. You keep to your determination, I to mine."

"Is that all the return you make to those who have given you life, who have watched over your in-

fancy, your childhood. The fiercest passion cools; a wife can be replaced, but not a father or mother," said Madame Savoisy.

"Why should I be grateful for a life you render miserable," he asked, coldly.

"Child, child! how can the liveliness of our faith be shown except by the sacrifices we make for it?" asked the Pasteur; adding, "You almost tempt me to believe that you are tainted by the free thinking now so unhappily rife in the world. It would seem that you have come to think all religions equally good."

"Father, I have been wandering about the world for more than seven years, and I have observed that virtue is not the monopoly of one class of Christians; that form of worship cannot be bad which produces good people. Madame de Beaupré worships the same God, believes in the same Saviour in whom I believe. That she shows her belief by sharing in ceremonies different from ours, is not a valid reason with me for separating us. You think differently — you are my father — and I renounce, in submission to you, all the hopes — all that renders life dear to me. I don't know what effect the renunciation may have on me hereafter. Be satisfied with the present sacrifice."

"The present sacrifice will spare you much after pain, Raymond. Believe in what I wrote you; there is nothing that so consolidates affection as a great conviction shared in common; there can be no moral

well-being in a family where there is not union in religion."

"Farewell, my father! farewell, my mother."

"Raymond, if you go to Mexico you will kill me," and Madame Savoisy fell into a chair with gasping sobs.

"Poor mother!" he said, bending down and kissing her forehead.

"You will not go?" she cried, seizing his arm and holding it in a convulsive grasp. "I cannot part with you, my darling; I cannot let you go to certain death."

"God bless you, mother!"

"Promise — promise! You must promise."

The latter part of this trying scene had had an unexpected spectator.

Lina, who slept in the room adjoining that in which this interview was taking place, had been awakened by the sound of voices in high debate. Sitting up in her bed, she had recognized her brother Raymond as one of the speakers. Her mother's bitter cry had frightened the girl. She got up, slipped on some of her clothes, and with an instinctive feeling of where effectual help was to be found, she burst into Madame de Beaupré's room, exclaiming —

"Raymond is here, and they are all quarreling dreadfully. Do go to them; tell Raymond not to be unkind to poor mamma. Oh! make haste, or he will go away, come, come!"

Madame de Beaupré, startled, scared, understanding of all that Lina had said only that Raymond was in the house, yielded to the girl's impetuous urging.

Neither father, mother, nor son, was aware that there had been a timid knock at the door, nor that it had been opened, until Thérèse came up to them. Raymond gazed in silence at the small pale creature as colourless as her white dressing-gown, more like a spirit than a living woman. He 'gazed in silence but for one minute, then he held out his arms to her. Slowly, as one whose limbs refuse their office, she went to him. He clasped her to his heart, held her in a tight embrace, as though nothing on this earth should take her from him. Words were murmured, so low that none save themselves could catch their meaning; then Thérèse, lifting her head from his breast, said simply —

"Raymond's church shall be my church; where he goes, I will go. By his side in this world, and with him in eternity."

A great and solemn hush followed this unexpected declaration; the hearts of all present were too much moved for speech.

The first words spoken were from Pasteur Savoisy, and they were, —

"Let us pray."

CHAPTER XX.

A Scandalous Marriage.

THE prediction of the single philosopher of Magny le Sec was fulfilled. The whole town went in procession to visit Madame de Beaupré as soon as it was known that she had returned home. Those who had talked most against her were among the foremost.

After all she was their only Vicomtesse. She herself announced to the Demoiselles de Tremereus her intended marriage with Sous-Lieutenant Savois; worse and worse! Why could she not have been satisfied with her flirtation? Who wished to interfere with her or it? Calumny? gossip? care for her reputation? — nonsense — no one had ever believed a word against her.

L'Abbé Poulot was sent to argue with her. She was assured that she would find it difficult to obtain a dispensation — no priest in Magny le Sec would perform the ceremony in a church; the most she might expect would be, that the marriage mass should be said outside the church-door.

"I should not care if it were said on the high road," was the quick retort. "I shall trouble no priest of

Magny le Sec. I shall be satisfied with the civil marriage, and the religious ceremony according to the Protestant Church."

From this time it was said that Mademoiselle de Tremereus' head acquired a chronic vibration. She consulted all the superiors of the religious orders in the town, wrote seven pages to Monseigneur to inform him of what was plotting. The "ladies" also wrote to all the duchesses, countesses, marquises, and viscounts belonging to the de Beaupré and de Morville families, to implore them to discover some means of preventing this double guilt of apostasy and mesalliance. Was it not like an attack of mental alienation? Of course there must be a *conseil de famille*. Would it not be wise to threaten Madame de Beaupré with being deprived of the guardianship of her child?

The whole of the noble kindred of Madame de Beaupré unanimously blamed her. They wrote her letters which covered her cheeks with the hot flush of indignation, but they failed signally in any argument that persuaded the bride-elect that she was about to commit a silly and unbecoming act.

M. d'Esbryat's letter was the only one that gave Madame de Beaupré any comfort. He told her that he believed she was in the right to marry the man for whom, in spite of the disparity of their rank and fortune, she seemed to have a sincere attachment. The only change he should propose in her programme

would be that M. Raymond Savoisy should leave the army. M. d'Esbryat urged this point as one which would spare her many inconveniences and disagreeables.

"If M. Savoisy would consent to follow this advice," concluded M. d'Esbryat, "his wedding present should be the nomination to some collectorship, which would also assure him a position independent of his wife's fortune."

It would be difficult to describe the enthusiastic gratitude with which this letter inspired Madame de Beaupré. It was the taking away the one thorn from her marriage. She had had a dread of going about with a regiment; and it would besides give the greatest satisfaction to Monsieur and Madame Savoisy that Raymond should leave the army. His seven years' service had been completed just two months ago. He *must* accept M. d'Esbryat's offer; and of course he did so.

The excitement of Magny le Sec, which had subsided during the delay necessary for carrying out M. d'Esbryat's project, rose again to fever-pitch the day of the publication of the banns of marriage between Thérèse, Vicomtesse de Beaupré, Baronne de Souliat née de Morville, and Raymond Savoisy, late Sous-lieutenant of the 101st of the line, actually Payeur at X——, son of Pasteur Savoisy, of Castelnaudary.

(In France the banns of marriage are not only an-

nounced from the pulpit, but appear in writing on the walls of the audience-room of the Mairie, and outside the parish church door.)

"A proof that she is sufficiently ashamed of herself," announced Mademoiselle de Tremereus to the public, "is, that she is getting herself no trousseau. I don't hear even of a wedding-dress."

"And luckily she has lost all her beauty," added Mademoiselle Virginie.

Another subject that engaged public attention was the marriage-settlement. Before one syllable of it had been written, it was asserted as an indubitable fact that she had settled two hundred thousand francs on M. Savoisy.

"Horrible! it was bribery — downright buying a husband!"

As for the man himself, there were no words of contempt in the dictionary strong enough for his case. All this while, be it understood, visitors were as numerous in Madame de Beaupré's salon as ever.

Raymond was absent at X——, making himself acquainted with his new duties as Payeur. Thérèse had exacted this of him, in the certainty that his patience would give way under the provocation of all the gossip about her marriage which was to be expected.

Not even Miss Power, who saw her at all hours, could detect a trace of irritation or annoyance in the

Vicomtesse at any of the insidious advice or hints with which she was assailed under the disguise of friendliness.

When openly attacked with questions or demands for explanations, she answered that if she supposed her marriage was one of those actions which required explanation or excuse, she should never have contemplated it.

At last the important day arrived for the assembling of the *conseil de famille*. It was believed that the nephew of the late Vicomte de Beaupré, as the nearest of kin to the child, would carry his point of taking from Madame de Beaupré the guardianship of little Berthe, and that he would succeed in having the child removed from under her mother's roof. M. Savoisy being a Protestant, and the quasi-certainty that Madame de Beaupré was about to renounce, or had even already renounced, the Church of her fathers, were strong arguments for such a step.

It was only at this moment that Christian Power remarked any nervousness in Madame de Beaupré's manner.

"If they succeed, Raymond will be so distressed on my account," she said to Christian.

One remarkable quality about happy lovers is their blindness to all that relates to others. Thérèse never noticed that her governess, for whom she really had an affection, had become thin to gauntness. She never

noticed that she avoided Raymond; that she never spoke of him; that she shrunk from giving a promise to remain with the new-married couple. Thérèse seemed to take it for granted that the marriage gave as much satisfaction to Miss Power as to herself, and was for ever trying to induce her to tell her of Raymond's youth, coaxing her to praise him. It was one of those blindnesses that the French call "une grace d'état."

To return to the Conseil de Famille. The Juge de Paix, who presides on such occasions, happened in this case to be a man of a clear head and good heart. He had an interview with the troubled little Vicomtesse, in which he advised her to invite some one or other of her relations not unfavourable to her marriage, whose influence might act as a counterpoise to that of Monsieur Jules de Beaupré and that of the Demoiselles de Tremereens, who were known to be infuriated by the knowledge that she would publicly join her husband's Church on the day of her marriage.

Madame de Beaupré wrote to M. d'Esbryat, begging him to give her his support at this moment of battle with malice and prejudice.

His arrival at Magny was a surprise, and not an agreeable one, to the daughters of Comte Adhemar. They had a presentiment that they were about to be checkmated. And so it turned out. The waverers,

and there are always waverers in every conflict, at once went over to the Vicomte d'Esbryat, who was a more important personage than either M. Jules de Beaupré or Mademoiselle de Tremereus. The two *hobereaux* on whom "the ladies" had counted as their vassals, deserted at once to the rich nobleman who, in speaking to them, called them, "Mon cousin."

Madame de Beaupré had made it a point of honour with herself that nothing that was inflicted on her, on account of her marriage, should make her shed a tear. She would have considered tears a treason to Raymond; but she very nearly broke down when the Juge de Paix came and told her, with kindly feeling, that the guardianship of her child was confirmed to her. It was then that, with an overflowing heart, she gave him her full confidence as to the intended arrangements of her money. She had been anxious, in order to satisfy M. Savoisy's scruples, to give up two-thirds of her fortune at once to Berthe; but as that was difficult, if not impossible, to manage, she had decided that half of her income should be given yearly to public charities, without reference to religious persuasion. She begged the Juge de Paix to read over her marriage-contract, that he might hereafter bear testimony to M. Savoisy's disinterestedness. It was when fulfilling this request that the Juge de Paix became acquainted that a provision had been made for Miss Power.

The notary, old in the world's ways, and whose

misfortune it had been to see always the wrong side of human nature, said that he had witnessed a curious rivalry of disinterestedness between Raymond Savoisy and Madame de Beaupré, adding, "This is the first contract of a marriage from affection drawn up in my office during the forty years I have been a notary. I hope I may live to see how the experiment answers."

When it became known that M. le Vicomte d'Esbryat and the Marquis and Marquise de P—, and three, if not four, Comtesses were coming from Paris to be present at Madame de Beaupré's wedding, the hostile faction, hitherto so united, split in two. All the principal families of Magny courted an invitation. Madame Dubois-Oudin took the lead in the reaction, by declaring that all the evil reports had been the effect of ill-will between class and class—a war of the lower orders against the aristocracy, among whom she ranged herself by implication. It was at this moment that some one asking the Juge de Paix if he were going to the wedding-breakfast, he replied, —

"Why should I? I have never said a word against Madame la Vicomtesse or M. Savoisy."

As it happened, no invitations to anyone in the town were given to the breakfast. The party was to be composed solely of the immediate members of the bride and bridegroom's family. Yes, there was an exception — Monsieur and Madame Frankomme were there. Monsieur Frankomme had not forgotten his

benefactress, and had earnestly begged to be allowed to perform on the organ at the marriage-ceremony.

The Protestant church was full to suffocation, to witness what Mademoiselle de Tremereus called "A scandalous marriage."

The Pasteur Savoisy himself performed the marriage-ceremony, and several persons mistaking Madame Savoisy and Lina for the Comtesse and Mademoiselle de Q—, pronounced them to be surpassingly elegant and distinguished.

There was a general wonder and a general abuse of the music played on the occasion by M. Frankomme. No doubt some Huguenot psalmody. It happened to be Handel's "Bridal Chorus."

A week after the departure of the young couple, they were forgotten, save by the Demoiselles de Tremereus, who had to seek for another tenant of their Rez de Chaussée.

"No more young widows need apply" was their warning cry. "They hoped Madame Savoisy would be happy; but they knew she would not. No woman could, who had so forgotten all that was due to her rank."

Miss Power is for the present at Castelnaudary with Pasteur and Madame Savoisy.

THE END.

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